

# STARK TERROR

VOODOO MAGIC

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**SWAMP MONSTER**  
**MORE DEADLY**  
**THAN THE MALE**  
**VAMPIRE!**  
*FINAL CHOICE*



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# STARK TERROR

VOL. 1, NO. 3

APRIL 1971

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FRED HARRIS HAD TWO FAULTS IN THE EYES OF HIS WIFE, RITA -- ONE WAS THE LACK OF MONEY -- BUT MOST PEOPLE HAVE THAT FAULT, SO SHE COULDN'T BE TOO ANGRY AT THAT! IT WAS THE OTHER DEFECT THAT BOTHERED HER -- HER HUSBAND WAS JUST TOO --

# CLUMSY



WATCH OUT -- OH MY NEW SWEATER -- IT'S RUINED! AND IT COST SO MUCH MONEY!

OH, I'M SORRY, RITA-BABY! I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED -- GUESS MY MIND WAS ON THAT NEW EXPERIMENT AT THE LAB!



THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I WONDER WHY I LOVE YOU -- YOU'RE SO -- SO CLUMSY!

BUT RITA -- BUT DARLING! I JUST CAN'T HELP IT! GUESS I WAS BORN WITH TWO LEFT HANDS!

BUT RITA WAS A STRANGE GIRL -- AND COULD PUT UP WITH FRED'S CLUMMINESS -- THE QUESTION OF MONEY -- OR THE LACK OF IT WAS BEGINNING TO GET HER DOWN!

IT'S NO USE, I'VE HAD THIS LONG ENOUGH FRED -- WHAT GOOD IS A MARRIAGE WITHOUT MONEY! THE SAYING TWO CAN LIVE AS CHEAPLY AS ONE, IS NONSENSE!

I KNOW A SCIENTIST DOESN'T MAKE MUCH -- BUT WE'VE MANAGED TO GET ALONG!

MAYBE YOU CAN -- BUT NOT ME! I'VE BEEN POOR ALL MY LIFE! IT'S TIME THAT CHANGED! WE'VE GOT TO HAVE MORE MONEY, FRED -- AND I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THAT I DON'T CARE HOW YOU GET IT!



RITA COULDN'T HELP BEING MONEY HUNGRY--SHE HAD ALWAYS BEEN A POOR GIRL --- THAT'S WHY SHE HAD ALWAYS WANTED THINGS-- THE THINGS SHE KNEW EXISTED BUT NEVER HAD! BUT THEN SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH FRED! SHE NEVER COULD FIGURE OUT WHY --PEOPLE PLAN AND FIGURE-- THEN ALONG COMES SOMEBODY AND ALL THOSE PLANS GO RIGHT OUT THE WINDOW!

TAKE THE TIME THEY MET-- YOU COULD HARDLY CALL IT A ROMANTIC GETTING! IT WAS JUST FRED--ACTING NORMALLY-- TRIPPING OVER HIS OWN FEET---

OH, I'M TERRIBLY SORRY-- YOU MUST LET ME PAY FOR THE DAMAGE!  
THAT'S ALL RIGHT-- ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN!



FROM SUCH A BEGINNING, ROMANCE BLOSSOMED! AND EVENTUALLY THEY MARRIED! BUT THAT DIDN'T CHANGE FRED--IF ANYTHING, THE NERVOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION MADE HIM EVEN CLUMSIER!

WELL, THAT'S ONE WAY OF GETTING YOUR BRIDE OVER THE THRESHOLD!

OH, RITA--RITA -- FORGIVE ME! I'M SUCH A CLUMSY LOUT!



THEY SET UP HOUSEKEEPING -- AND AT FIRST THE CLUMSINESS OF FRED WAS TAKEN AS A BIG JOKE!

NOW LOOK WHAT I'VE DONE! I KNEW I SHOULD HAVE LET YOU HANG THIS PICTURE!

HA! HA! YOU LOOK SO RIDICULOUS, DARLING --AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE PAINTING-- WE CAN ALWAYS GET SOME POOR ARTIST TO PAINT US ANOTHER!



BUT THERE WERE TIMES WHEN FRED'S CLUMSINESS WASN'T SO FUNNY--TIMES WHEN IT EMBARRASSED HIS WIFE WHO WAS TRYING TO IMPRESS PEOPLE!

WATCH IT -- YOU CLUMSY FOOL!

OH, GOSH, I'M REALLY SORRY-- REALLY SORRY!



BUT SHE LOVED FRED--THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF THAT-- ALL HE HAD TO DO WAS TAKE HER IN HIS ARMS AND SHE FORGOT ALL ABOUT HIS BEING CLUMSY -- ALL ABOUT THE EMBARRASSMENT HE CAUSED HER!

I LOVE YOU SO, RITA-- YOU'LL NEVER KNOW HOW MUCH!

OH FRED -- FRED -- FRED!



AND THEN HE WOULD KISS HER -- AND AT FIRST HER THOUGHTS WERE ONLY OF HER LOVE FOR THIS MAN -- BUT LATELY OTHER THOUGHTS WERE POPPING INTO HER HEAD-- OTHER IDEAS--

IF ONLY WE HAD MONEY-- WEALTH -- THIS MARRIAGE WOULD BE PERFECT!





IN HIS LABORATORY, FRED WAS A DIFFERENT PERSON-- THERE THE CLUMBINESS AND THE AWKWARDNESS WERE GONE-- THERE HE WAS THE PICTURE OF EFFICIENCY-- A DEFT TOUCH BEHIND A SKILLED MIND --



LIKE MOST OF US, RITA KNEW LITTLE OF A SCIENTIST'S ACTIVITY-- AND AT TIMES CARED LESS-- BUT ON THIS PARTICULAR DAY SOME UNKNOWN BUG OF CURIOSITY GOT THE BEST OF HER --

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT ICE, FRED? WHAT KIND OF EXPERIMENT IS THIS?

I'M TRYING SOMETHING WITH SUSPENDED ANIMATION -- TRYING TO KEEP THE CAT BARELY ALIVE FOR A PERIOD OF TIME!



NOW FRED WAS IN HIS GLORY-- NOW HE COULD TALK OF SOMETHING THAT WAS NEAR AND DEAR TO HIM-- AND TO A WIFE THAT EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN SOMETHING ELSE BESIDES MONEY!

THE RUSSIANS HAVE HAD SOME SUCCESS WITH SUSPENDED ANIMATION! AND I THINK I'VE FINISHED THEIR WORK! BY PACKING THE ANIMAL IN ICE I BELIEVE I CAN KEEP THIS ANIMAL LIKE THIS FOR YEARS!



BUT RITA WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT SUSPENDED ANIMATION -- MUCH MORE!

WOULD IT WORK ON A HUMAN -- AND FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME -- SAY ABOUT SEVEN YEARS?

I'VE NEVER EXPERIMENTED WITH HUMANS, BUT I HAVE ENOUGH FAITH IN MY WORK TO SAY THAT IT WOULD WORK! AS FOR HOW LONG, I SUPPOSE YOU COULD KEEP SOMETHING SUSPENDED THAT LONG -- AS LONG AS SOMEONE WAS AROUND TO MAKE SURE THAT NOTHING WENT WRONG!



RITA HAD HEARD ENOUGH-- ENOUGH TO GET HER BRAIN WORKING -- A PLAN HAD BEEN BORN--

DON'T YOU WANT TO HEAR ME, DARLING -- IT ISN'T AS SIMPLE AS I MADE IT SOUND, YOU KNOW!

NO! I'VE HEARD ENOUGH-- RIGHT NOW I'VE GOT SOME THINKING TO DO-- AND I DON'T WANT TO DISTURB YOU -- NOT NOW!



YES, RITA HAD FOUND THE ANSWER-- THE ANSWER TO WHERE SHE WAS GOING TO GET THAT MONEY SHE WAS ALWAYS DREAMING ABOUT!

IT'S GOT TO WORK-- IT JUST HAS TO!



THE HOURS PASSED AND RITA THOUGHT THE WHOLE PLAN THROUGH--AND THAT NIGHT SHE REVEALED IT TO FRED-- TO A SHOCKED FRED!

FIRST WE'LL TAKE OUT A LARGE INSURANCE POLICY ON MY LIFE! THEN YOU'LL PACK ME IN ICE - SUSPENDED ANIMATION--YOU CALL IT--FOR SEVEN YEARS! I'LL BE DECLARED LEGALLY DEAD, THEN YOU AND I CAN COLLECT THE MONEY! OF COURSE YOU'LL BRING ME BACK TO LIFE AND WE'LL GO AWAY AND START ALL OVER -- BUT THIS TIME WE'LL BE RICH!

NO! YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT!

BUT RITA KNEW HOW TO GET AROUND HER HUSBAND--FRED COULD NEVER RESIST HER SLIGHTEST WHIM ANYHOW--HE CERTAINLY COULDN'T NOW--

IF YOU REALLY LOVED ME-- YOU'D WANT THAT MONEY TOO-- 'CAUSE WITHOUT MONEY THIS MARRIAGE WILL BREAK UP! AND YOU DON'T WANT THAT, DO YOU?

NO-- I COULDN'T BEAR TO LOSE YOU-- I JUST COULDN'T-- ALL RIGHT, RITA --IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT I'LL GO THROUGH WITH IT!

RITA WAS IN A HURRY TO START HER PLAN --AND SO THE VERY NEXT DAY --

THERE YOU ARE, A POLICY FOR \$100,000 ON YOUR WIFE! SEEMS STRANGE THOUGH, IN MOST FAMILIES IT'S THE HUSBAND WHO'S INSURED, NOT THE WIFE!

NEVER MIND ABOUT THAT, MISTER-- WE HAVE OUR REASONS-- WE HAVE OUR REASONS!

NOW FRED BEGAN TO SEE THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE SCHEME-- AFTER ALL, IT WAS HIS MONEY TOO-- OR IT WOULD BE HIS MONEY IN SEVEN YEARS--

WE'VE DONE IT! WE'VE DONE IT!

NO, NOT YET -- THIS IS ONLY THE FIRST STEP-- NOW COMES THE MORE DIFFICULT PART!

YES, THERE WAS A LOT MORE TO BE DONE--AND IMPATIENT FRED WAS IN A HURRY TO START--

NOT YET, FRED-- IF I WERE TO BE MISSING SO SOON AFTER TAKING OUT THE POLICY, THE AUTHORITIES WOULD BE SUSPICIOUS -- NO -- WE'LL JUST HAVE TO BIDE OUR TIME AND PLAN FOR THE FUTURE!

RITA WAS SO CLEVER -- IT WASN'T EVERY MAN WHO HAD A WIFE LIKE THAT--NO WONDER FRED LOVED HER SO -- AND SO THEY KISSED TO THEIR FUTURE -- A FUTURE THAT WOULD BE FILLED WITH WONDERS THAT WEALTH COULD ACQUIRE!



YEAR PASSED AND FINALLY IT WAS TIME --

READY,  
DARLING?

YES!



GENTLY HE PLACED THE ETHER CONE OVER HER FACE -- HER LOVELY FACE -- A FACE THAT WAS TO REMAIN HIDDEN FOR SEVEN LONG YEARS --

BREATHE DEEPLY  
RITA -- BREATHE  
DEEPLY!

GOODBYE -- MY  
LOVE -- GOODBYE --  
GOOD --



NOW THE SCIENTIST WAS AT WORK -- NO LONGER THE HUSBAND, FRED WAS THE PICTURE OF EFFICIENCY -- HIS FINGERS WERE SURE AND DEFT -- AND HE WORKED WITHOUT HESITATION --

THERE -- JUST A LITTLE MORE ICE --  
NOW -- GOT TO KEEP THAT  
TEMPERATURE DOWN!



HE REMOVED THE BLOOD FROM HER BODY AND FROZE IT INTO A SMALL BRACELET -- A BRACELET WHICH HE STRUNG AROUND HER NECK -- HER WHITE ALABASTER NECK -- HER PERFECT NECK --

MIGHT LOSE THIS --  
BETTER KEEP  
IT WITH HER!

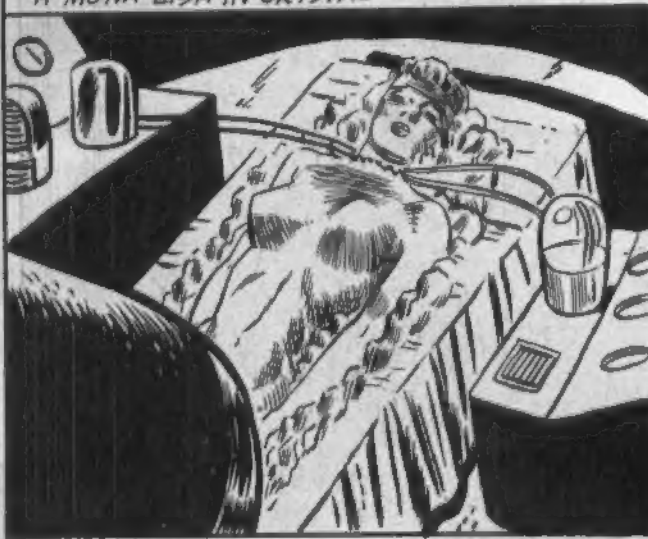


THE PERFECTIONIST IN THE MAN CAME INTO PLAY -- NOW HE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SOMETHING HE'D ALWAYS DREAMED ABOUT --

NOW I CAN STRAIGHTEN  
OUT THAT BUMP ON HER  
NOSE -- SURE IS EASY  
WHEN IT'S JUST  
KE!



FINALLY, THE TASK WAS FINISHED -- AND RITA LAY THERE -- A SHIMMERING, SHINY MOLD OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN -- OF AN ICE WOMAN -- OF A MONA LISA IN CRYSTAL --





FRED REPORTED RITA'S DISAPPEARANCE AND OF COURSE THERE WAS AN INQUEST! BUT THERE WAS NO BODY TO BE FOUND, UNDER THE LAW, HE WOULD HAVE TO WAIT SEVEN YEARS TO COLLECT THE MONEY! IT WAS JUST AS RITA HAD SAID-- JUST AS SHE FIGURED! IT WAS NO WONDER THAT HE LOVED RITA! WHO COULD HELP BUT LOVE A WOMAN LIKE RITA?

THE TIME PASSED AND MONTHS TURNED INTO YEARS AND SOMEHOW FRED MANAGED TO ACT THE PART OF THE MOURNING HUSBAND--FOR DEEP INSIDE HE WAS A MOURNING HUSBAND--WHAT FUN WAS THERE IN BEING MARRIED, WHEN HE HAD NO WIFE!

IT'S SO LONELY! IF I HAD KNOWN IT WOULD BE LIKE THIS I WOULD NEVER HAVE GONE THROUGH WITH IT!



FINALLY FRED COULDN'T TAKE THE LONELINESS ANY LONGER-- HE HAD TO SEE RITA-- TO LOOK AT HER BEAUTIFUL FACE -- AND SO AT THE LABORATORY--

SHE'S EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN I REMEMBER-- SHE'S SO-- SO-- PERFECT!



BUT THE BEST PLANS ARE OFTEN UPSET-- AND AT THAT MOMENT --

SOMEBODYS COMING --I MUST HIDE THE BODY-- GOT TO -- OH NO! NO! NO!



THE CLUMSY IDIOT--THE ANKWARD FOOL--NOW HIS CLUMSINESS HAD COST HIM -- LOOK AT HER, FRED-- BROKEN INTO A THOUSAND PIECES--TINY FRAGMENTS OF WHAT ONCE WAS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN-- OF WHAT ONCE WAS YOUR WIFE! DON'T STAND THERE LIKE AN IDIOT -- DO SOMETHING -- DO SOMETHING BEFORE SHE SELTS!



HE HAD TO SAVE HER --BRING HER BACK TO LIFE --PUT THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER AGAIN! NO LONGER DID HE THINK OF THE MONEY-- NOW HE WAS ONLY INTERESTED IN SAVING HIS WIFE -- BUT SHE WAS LIKE A JIG-SAW PUZZLE --HIS JOB WAS TO PUT HER TOGETHER -- BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE!

YES, HE PUT HER BACK TOGETHER AGAIN -- AS BEST HE COULD --BUT SOMEHOW SHE DIDN'T LOOK THE SAME -- WELL, FRED WAS A LITTLE CLUMSY AT THAT SORT OF THING, AND THEN AGAIN, PARTS OF HER BODY MELTED, SO YOU COULDN'T EXPECT TOO NEAT A JOB -- COULD YOU?

LOOK AT ME, LOOK AT ME, YOU CLUMSY ANKWARD IDIOT! LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE!

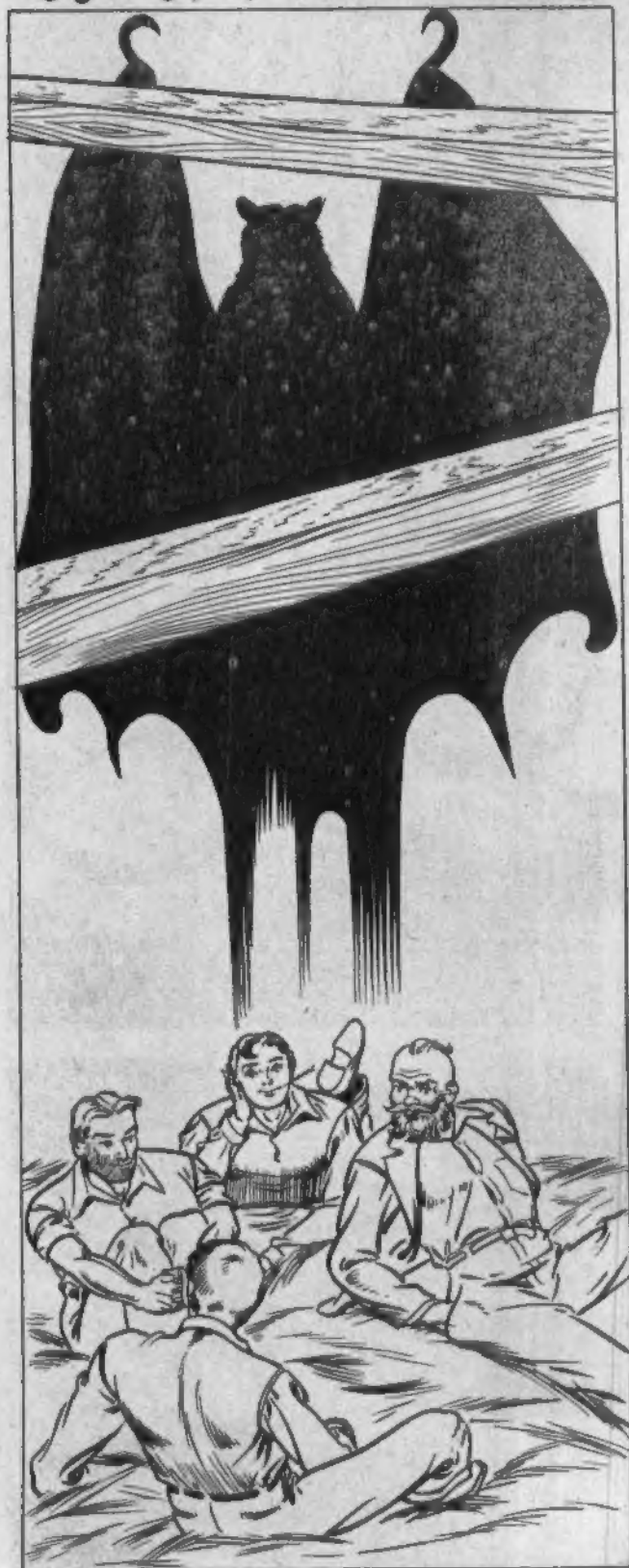


FRED AND RITA ARE STILL MARRIED-- BUT SOMEHOW THEY ACT A LITTLE COLD TOWARD EACH OTHER! AND WHEN THEY EMBRACE, FRED COMPLAINS THAT SHE FEELS LIKE ICE! AND OF COURSE RITA DOESN'T DARE GO OUT INTO THE SUN... WELL, WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT WHEN SOMEBODYS ASSETS ARE FROZEN! HEH-HEH-HEH!



NOBODY TAKES THIS SORT OF STORY SERIOUSLY...  
THAT WOULD BE SHEER NONSENSE, FOR EVERYONE  
KNOWS THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A

# VAMPIRE



AS THE 4:06 FREIGHT SLOWED DOWN TO MAKE  
THE SHARP TURN AT CRAGSHILL JUNCTION,  
FOUR GENTLEMEN OF THE ROAD DISEMBARKED  
IN USUAL UNCEREMONIOUS FASHION...



ALL OFF,  
BOYS!

LET'S  
HIT IT!



LOOKS LIKE  
IT'S GONNA  
FOUR, LADS...

THERE'S A  
BARN! WE  
CAN STAY  
THERE TILL  
IT'S OVER!

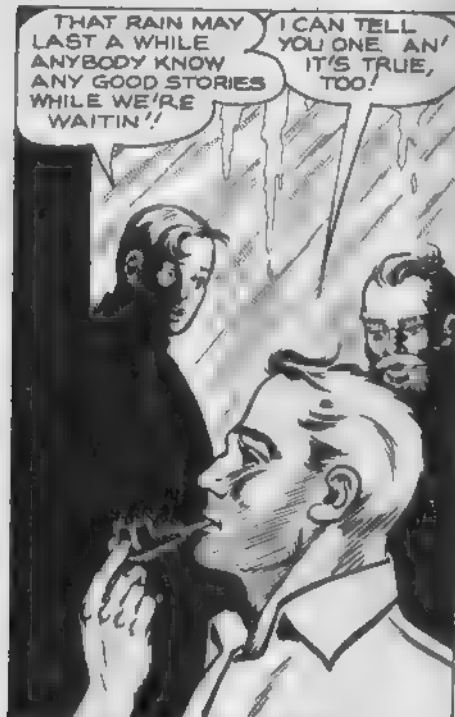
GOOD IDEA...  
LET'S GO!



JUST  
MADE IT!

BOY, LOOKIT  
THAT RAIN!



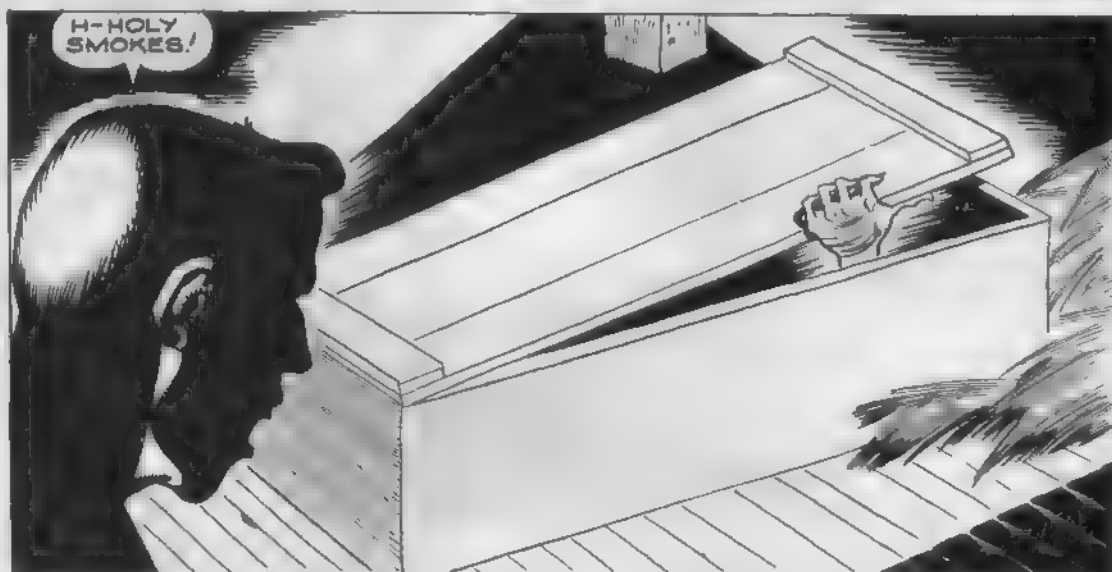


WELL, NOBODY TRIED TO LIFT THE LID TO FIND OUT, THEY LET IT GO AT THAT, AND PRETTY SOON THEY WAS ALL ASLEEP..

IT MUSTA BEEN A LITTLE PAST MIDNIGHT WHEN SOMETHIN' WOKE ONE OF 'EM UP ..



HE LOOKED AROUND IN THE DARKNESS, AND ALL OF A SUDDEN HE SEEN IT! THE MOON WAS SHININ' RIGHT ON THAT COFFIN AN' DARNED IF THERE WASN'T SOMETHIN' INSIDE THAT BOX PUSHIN' UP THE LID!



THE POOR GINK WAS SO SCARED HE COULDN'T DO NOTHIN' BUT WATCH... AND PRETTY SOON, OUT OF THE COFFIN STEPS THE MOST GORGEOUS BABE HE EVER LAID EYES ON...



AS CALM AS YOU PLEASE, SHE WALKS OVER TO ONE OF THEM SLEEPIN' HOBOES AN' BENDS DOWN AN' KISSES HIM...A REAL, LONG KISS...



BUT A COUPLE OF MINUTES LATER SHE PICKS HER HEAD UP AN' WHAT HE SEES IS ENOUGH TO FREEZE WATER IN HELL...SHE'S GOT FANGS LIKE AN ANIMAL AND HER MOUTH IS DRIPPING...



BY THIS TIME, THE POOR GUY WAS SO PARALYZED HE COULDN'T EVEN SHAKE NO MORE! SHE FINISHED WITH THE FIRST GUY AND STARTED IN ON THE SECOND...



SHE WASN'T MORE THAN FOUR FEET FROM HIM WHEN SHE FINALLY FINISHED OFF THE SECOND COURSE AND LOOKED AT HIM FOR DESSERT! AND BROTHER, WHAT A LOOK THAT WAS...





WELL, THAT SNAPPED HIM OUT OF IT. HE JUMPED UP AND MADE A RUN FOR THE DOOR, SCREAMIN HIS HEAD OFF!



BUT SHE WAS TOO FAST FOR HIM.



WITH THE STRENGTH OF A GORILLA SHE HELD HIM SO HE COULDN'T MOVE... THEN SHE BARED HER FANGS...



... AND SUNK 'EM RIGHT INTO HIS THROAT!...



THE PAIN WAS HORRIBLE, AND HE FIGURED HIMSELF FOR A GONER WHEN SUDDENLY HE SPOTTED SOMETHIN' THAT HE KNEW WAS HIS ONLY CHANCE... A TREE WITH A LOW BRANCH STICKIN' STRAIGHT OUT



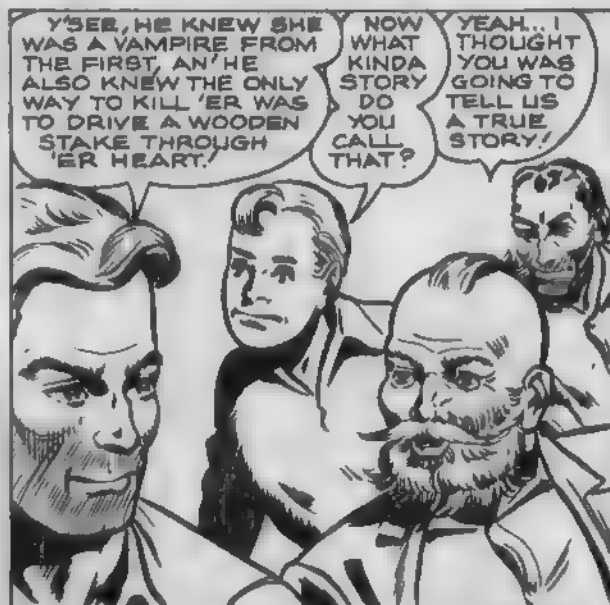
WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH HE PUSHED, MAKIN' HER STAGGER BACKWARDS TOWARD THE TREE...



THEN WITH A MIGHTY SHOVE, HE RAMMED HER INTO THAT BRANCH AND DROVE IT RIGHT THROUGH HER BACK AND INTO HER HEART!...



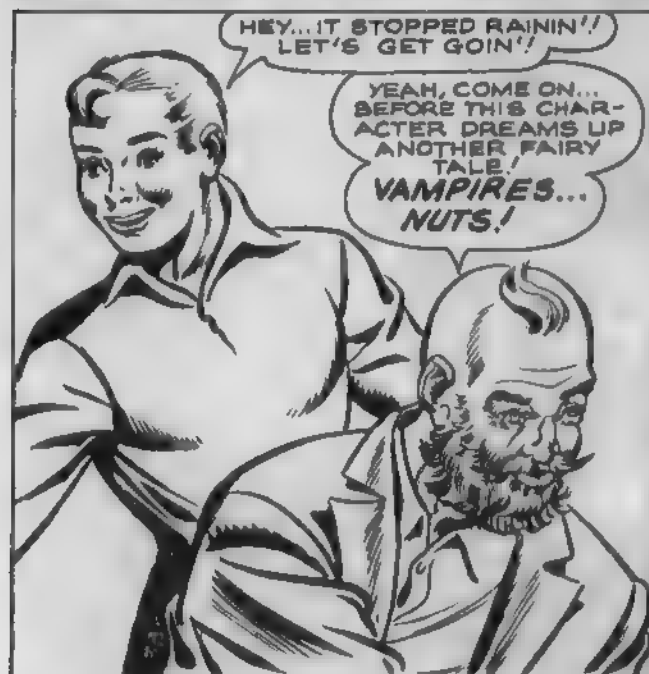
THE NEXT MORNING THEY WERE FOUND. THE TWO HOBOES LYIN' DEAD IN THE BARN, THE BLOOD DRAINED CLEAN OUT OF 'EM. THE THIRD ONE UNDER THE TREE UNCONSCIOUS, BUT STILL ALIVE... AND HER... HANGIN' ON THAT BRANCH... DEAD...



Y'SEE, HE KNEW SHE WAS A VAMPIRE FROM THE FIRST, AN' HE ALSO KNEW THE ONLY WAY TO KILL 'ER WAS TO DRIVE A WOODEN STAKE THROUGH 'ER HEART!

NOW WHAT KINDA STORY DO YOU CALL THAT?

YEAH... I THOUGHT YOU WAS GOING TO TELL US A TRUE STORY!



HEY... IT STOPPED RAININ'! LET'S GET GOIN'!

YEAH, COME ON... BEFORE THIS CHARACTER DREAMS UP ANOTHER FAIRY TALE! VAMPIRES... NUTS!

AS THE OTHER THREE MEN BEGAN THEIR HIKE TO TOWN, THE STORY TELLER PAUSED FOR A MOMENT! OUTSIDE THE BARN STOOD A TREE, AND AS HE STUDIED THE STUMP WHERE A BRANCH HAD RECENTLY BEEN SAWED OFF, HIS HAND INSTINCTIVELY CAME UP AND FINGERED THE TINY SCARS ALONG HIS THROAT...



THE END.



HAVE YOU EVER BEEN LOST? HAVE YOU EVER KNOWN THE PANIC AND UNUTTERABLE TERROR OF BEING TOTALLY AND COMPLETELY LOST? YOU HAVEN'T? -- THEN COME WITH JIM AND BETSY KEEGAN -- COME WITH THEM THROUGH AND BEYOND ---

# THE DOOR



BETSY AND JIM KEEGAN WERE A HAPPY, CAREFREE COUPLE AND THEY LIKED TO SPEND THEIR TIME DOING HAPPY, CAREFREE THINGS ---

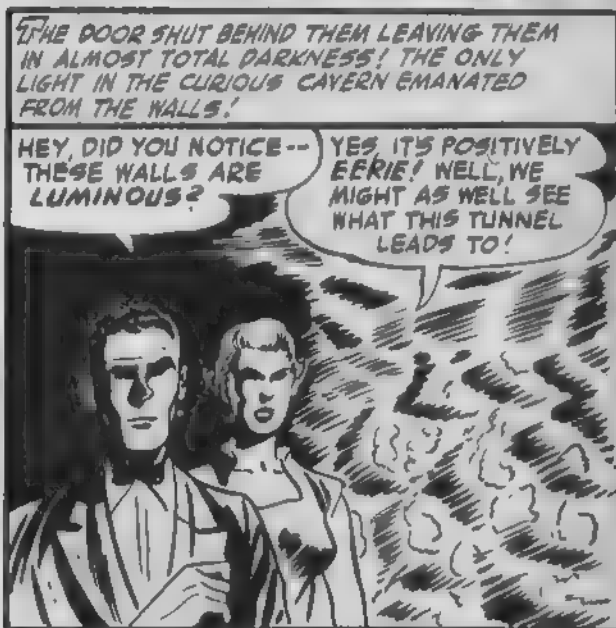
OOH, THE FUN HOUSE! LET'S GO IN, JIM!

OKAY! LOOK AT THAT DEVIL -- SEEMS ALMOST REAL!



THE FUN HOUSE WAS ALL THAT WAS CLAIMED FOR IT -- CRAZY-LOOKING, COCKEYED ROOMS, HILARIOUS CURVED MIRRORS, FLOORS THAT COLLAPSED UNDER YOU ---







IT WAS AT THAT MOMENT THAT JIM KEEGAN KNEW A MOMENT OF PANIC, FOR HE REALIZED SUDDENLY THAT HE HADN'T THE VAGUEST NOTION AS TO HOW TO GET BACK--

WELL, THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO-- WE'LL HAVE TO KEEP ON GOING AND TRUST TO LUCK! THIS TUNNEL HAS TO END SOMEWHERE!



BUT THE TUNNEL DID NOT END! IT WENT ON AND ON-- TURNING, TWISTING, BRANCHING INTO COUNTLESS TRIBUTARIES-- LEADING THEM DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE ENDLESS MAZE----

JIM! I'M SCARED! WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHY CAN'T WE FIND OUR WAY OUT?

I DON'T KNOW, BABY, BUT WE'VE GOT TO KEEP GOING!



THEY DID KEEP GOING! FOR HOURS AND HOURS THEY SEARCHED, TERROR GRIPPING THEM TIGHTER AND TIGHTER IN ITS SUFFOCATING GRASP! HUNGRY, FRIGHTENED AND EXHAUSTED, THEY REALIZED THAT THEY WERE COMPLETELY AND IRRETRIEVABLY LOST----

JIM, WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO US? WE'LL STARVE TO DEATH-- NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW! OH, JIM-- IT'S HORRIBLE!

EASY, HONEY-- EASY! WE'LL FIND A WAY!



SUDDENLY FROM OUT OF THE DARKNESS A FIGURE APPEARED----

JIM, LOOK!

A MAN--- BUT LOOK AT HIM!



THE CREATURE STAGGERED FORWARD--- LAUGHED ONCE IN A STRANGE, CRACKED, HIGH-PITCHED VOICE, AND THEN FELL AT THEIR FEET, HIS WHOLE BODY WRACKED WITH SOBS AND HYSTERICAL KEENING----



PARALYZED INTO SPEECHLESSNESS THEY WAITED UNTIL THE STRANGER HAD REGAINED HIS COMPOSURE! THEN THEY LISTENED SILENTLY AS HE TOLD THEM A STRANGE TALE----

MY NAME IS CONRAD STEINER! I AM-- I WAS A CIVIL ENGINEER! FIVE YEARS AGO I WAS SENT TO THIS LOCATION TO SURVEY THE AREA FOR A POSSIBLE AMUSEMENT PARK!



I WAS LOOKING OVER THE SITE WHEN I RAN ACROSS A STRANGE DOOR CARVED IN THE SIDE OF A CLIFF! I ENTERED IT AND--- WELL I GOT LOST SOMEHOW AND HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIND MY WAY OUT SINCE! YOU ARE THE FIRST HUMAN BEINGS I HAVE SEEN IN ALL THAT TIME!

FIVE YEARS! GOOD HEAVENS!

HOW HAVE YOU MANAGED TO STAY ALIVE WITHOUT FOOD OR WATER?



STEINER EXPLAINED THAT WATER WAS PLENTIFUL AS THE WALLS WERE CONSTANTLY COVERED WITH MOISTURE--

AS FOR FOOD--THIS GREEN MOLD OR WHATEVER IT IS HAS KEPT ME ALIVE SOMEHOW!

BUT THE DOOR-- DO YOU THINK YOU WILL EVER FIND IT AGAIN? IS THERE A POSSIBILITY OF OUR FINDING OUR WAY BACK TO THE DOOR?



WE WILL CONTINUE TO SEARCH FOR IT! YOU SEE, HERE IN THE LABYRINTH THERE IS NOT MUCH ELSE TO DO BUT SEARCH FOR THE DOOR!



SO THEY SEARCHED, LIVING SOLELY ON THE PECULIAR TASTELESS GREEN MOLD THAT CLUNG TO THE STONE WALLS! DAYS TURNED INTO WEEKS AND WEEKS INTO MONTHS-- GRADUALLY BETSY AND JIM FELT THEIR HOPES EBBING, AND AS HOPE LEFT THEM, SO, LITTLE BY LITTLE, DID THEIR SANITY--



THEY BECAME MERE SHADOWS OF THEIR FORMER SELVES AND STILL THEY WALKED AND WALKED SEARCHING-- INCESSANTLY, ENDLESSLY FOR THE DOOR-- THE DOOR TO CIVILIZATION-- TO SUNLIGHT-- TO LIFE! IT BURNED IN THEIR MINDS-- CONSUMED THEM-- DROVE THEM



--- AND THEN ONE DAY ---

A MAN!  
A MAN!

HE SEES US! HURRY--- HE'LL KNOW WHERE THE DOOR IS-- HE MUST KNOW!



THEY STUMBLED OVER EACH OTHER IN THEIR EAGERNESS TO GREET THE NEW STRANGER! HYSTERICALLY THEY LAUGHED AND CRIED AND KISSED HIS HANDS AND HIS FEET-- AND THEN THEY ASKED HIM ---

THE DOOR-- WHERE IS THE DOOR THAT WILL LEAD US FROM THIS INFERNAL HOLE!



HE GAZED AT THEM -- CURIOUSLY AT FIRST, AND THEN HE SMILED -- A SAD, SLOW SMILE! AT LAST HE SPOKE --

STRANGE THAT YOU SHOULD ASK ME THAT QUESTION -- YOU SEE, I HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR THE DOOR FOR THIRTY YEARS!





TIME BECAME MEANINGLESS NOW-- AND THE DOOR BECAME AN OBSESSION-- ALWAYS ELUDING THEM-- ALWAYS BEYOND THEIR GRASP--

I CAN'T -- GO -- ON --  
LEAVE -- ME -- LET --  
ME -- DIE -- !

NO! NO! WE CAN'T STOP  
NOW -- YOU CAN'T  
GIVE UP!



THEY HAD JUST ABOUT GIVEN UP -- HOPE HAD DRAINED FROM THEIR SOULS -- WHEN --

LOOK --  
A  
DOOR!

BUT -- IS -- IT --  
THE -- RIGHT --  
ONE ?



THEY STOOD BEFORE THE PORTAL -- AFRAID TO OPEN IT-- AFRAID THAT THIS WAS NOT THE ANSWER TO THEIR SEARCH-- AFRAID THAT THEY WOULD BE DOOMED FOR THE REST OF THEIR DAYS ---

SLOWLY JIM OPENED THE DOOR -- AND THEY LOOKED THROUGH TO FREEDOM-- TO WHERE FREEDOM SHOULD BE-- THEN THE SCENE BEFORE THEM REVEALED ITSELF AND THEY RECOILED IN HORROR -- IN TERROR -- !

GO AHEAD --  
OPEN IT --  
OPEN IT!



-- YES, THEY HAD FINALLY FOUND THE DOOR -- THE RIGHT DOOR - THE DOOR TO HADES!

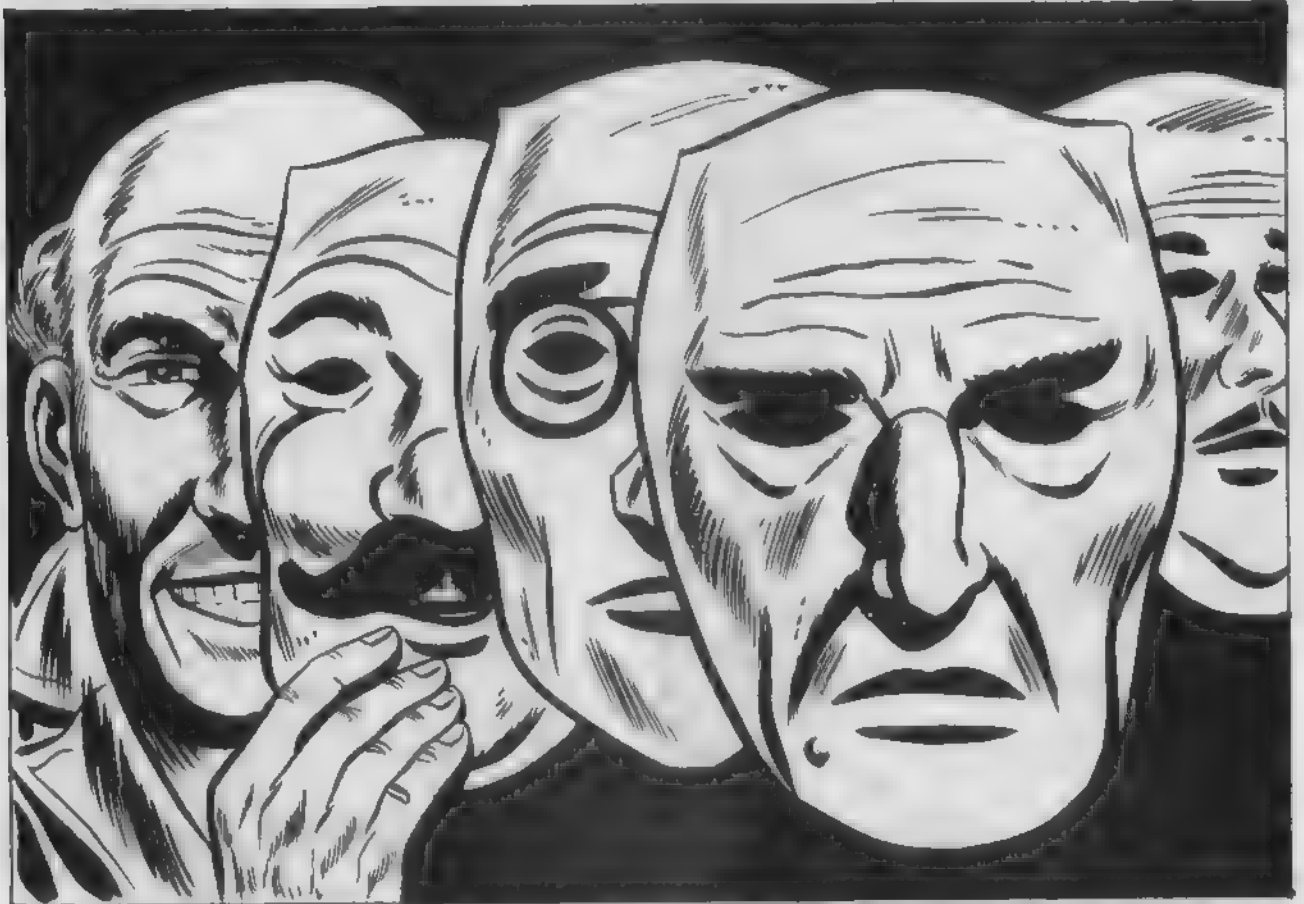
WELCOME -- WELCOME -- I SEE YOU FOUND THE WAY! GOOD! GOOD! ALWAYS ROOM FOR A FEW MORE! HEH -- HEH -- HEH!



THE  
END

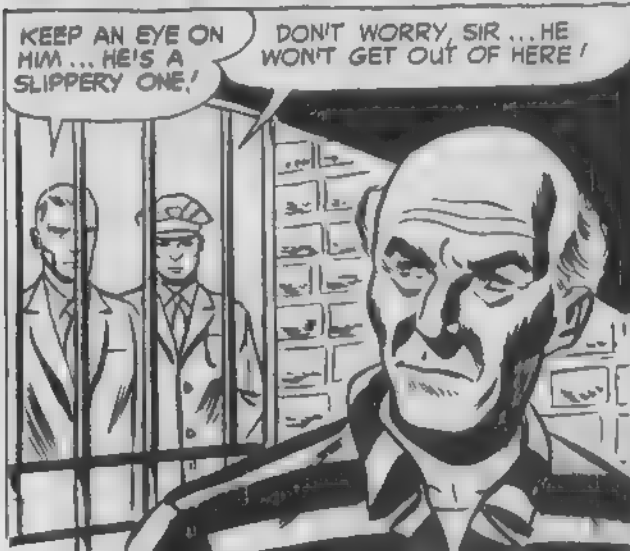
THE MASTER CONFIDENCE MAN... KNEW ALL THE TRICKS... HAD NO FEARS... FOR SILAS DUMAS ALWAYS HAD AN ACE UP HIS SLEEVE... THAT WAS...

# The DISGUISE!



THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY FINALLY PICKED UP SILAS DUMAS... BUT PICKING HIM UP WAS ONE THING, KEEPING HIM WAS ANOTHER...

SILAS DUMAS WATCHED THE TWO LAWYERS LEAVE... AND SMILED TO HIMSELF... HE HAD BEEN IN MUCH WORSE SPOTS THAN THIS... MUCH WORSE!





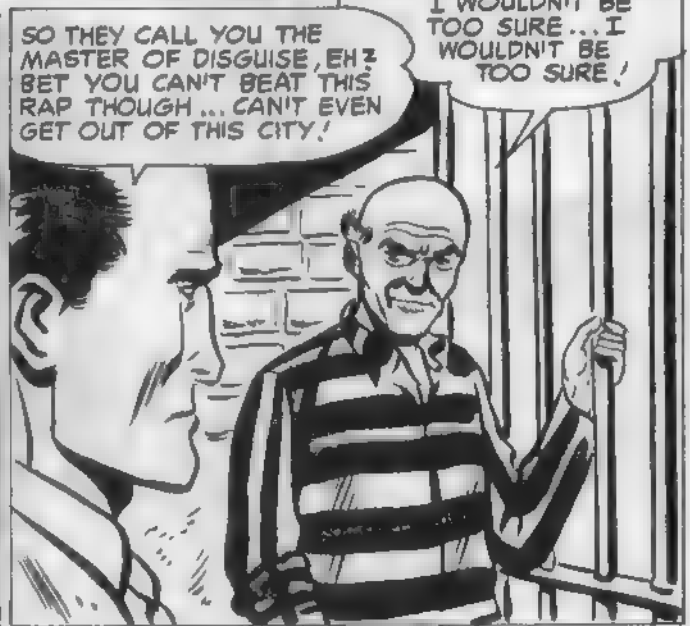
THE BIRTH OF AN IDEA WAS FORMED WHEN HE LOOKED OUT THE CELL WINDOW ONTO THE STREET BELOW...

BUT AN IDEA WAS ALSO BORN IN THE MIND OF THE DA AS HE VIEWED THE SAME SCENE...



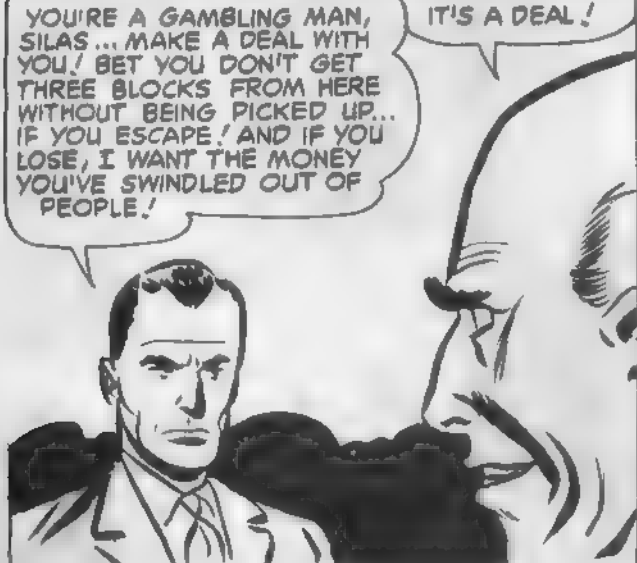
IT TOOK HIM BUT A SHORT TIME TO SET THE WHEELS GOING...

NOW THE NEXT PART...



NOW THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY WAS BEING THE CONFIDENCE MAN... WAS SETTING UP THE DEAL...

SILAS WAS ALWAYS A GAMBLER... AND HE WAS WILLING TO GAMBLE THIS TIME... FOR IT WAS A SURE THING... HOW COULD HE MISS...



NEVER MIND HOW SILAS GOT OUT OF JAIL...  
THAT DOESN'T CONCERN US...

IT WAS A SIMPLE MATTER FOR SILAS TO ENTER  
THE STORE... A MAN IN HIS BUSINESS BECOMES  
PROFICIENT AT THAT SORT OF THING...



HE MADE HIS WAY THROUGH THE SHOP TO THE  
BACK ROOM...

FIRST TO CHANGE HIS FACE... AND THE MASTER  
OF DISGUISE WENT QUICKLY TO WORK IN THE DIM  
LIGHT...



NOW TO CHANGE HIS CLOTHES... WHAT BETTER  
PLACE THAN A COSTUME STORE TO FIND A  
DISGUISE...

THEN HE WAS FINISHED... THE DISGUISE WAS  
PERFECT... HE'D SHOW THAT DA WHAT IT  
MEANT TO WAGER WITH THE MASTER!





THE DARKNESS OF THE STREET ENGULFED HIM AND BUT SUDDENLY THE PIERCING SHRILL OF A POLICE-  
HE STAYED IN THE SHADOWS JUST TO MAKE SURE... MAN'S WHISTLE BROUGHT HIM UP SHORT...



GOTTA MAKE IT TO THAT GARAGE... AND THE LOOT!



HOLD IT, BUDDY... DON'T MOVE, I'VE GOT MY GUN OUT!

B-BUT I'M NOT DOING ANYTHING WRONG!



NOT DOING ANYTHING WRONG... DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH! WHAT DID YOU THINK, YOU COULD JUST WALK OUT OF THAT JAIL AND KEEP ON GOING?

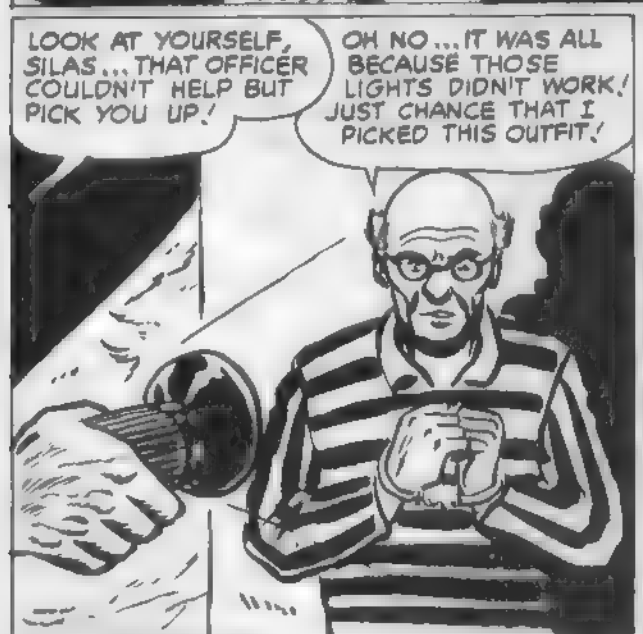
B-BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW?

A QUICK CALL BROUGHT THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY TO THE SCENE... A SATISFIED D.A. ...



OKAY, SILAS... YOU LOST... LET'S HAVE THAT INFORMATION!

BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW THAT POLICEMAN KNEW... WHAT GAVE ME AWAY?



LOOK AT YOURSELF, SILAS... THAT OFFICER COULDN'T HELP BUT PICK YOU UP!

OH NO... IT WAS ALL BECAUSE THOSE LIGHTS DIDN'T WORK! JUST CHANCE THAT I PICKED THIS OUTFIT!

YOU CAN'T BEAT THE LAW, SILAS... JUST LIKE YOU, THEY FIGURE ALL THE ANGLES... EVEN THOSE YOU DON'T FIGURE!



YOU DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE... NOT A CHANCE!

END

THROUGH THE PAGES OF HISTORY MAN HAS FOREVER REVERED HIS WOMEN... HE HAS PLACED THEM ON A PEDESTAL WHERE THEY ARE TO BE ADMIRER... ADORER... AND LOVED! AND IN THE YEAR 2253 MAN HAS NOT CHANGED... BUT NEITHER HAS THE FEMALE AND SO THE STRONGER SEX CONTINUES BLISSFULLY ON WITH THIS RELATIONSHIP, NEVER REALIZING THAT HIS PARTNER IS ...

# MORE DEADLY THAN THE MALE



TENSELY THE EARTHMEN PREPARED THEMSELVES FOR THE LANDING ON THE UNEXPLORED FOURTH PLANET OF THE STAR PROXIMA CENTAURI! THEY HAD TRAVELED FOUR LONG YEARS FROM MOTHER EARTH AND WERE THE FIRST MORTALS TO REACH THE DISTANT SOLAR SYSTEM...

BRACE YOURSELVES, MEN... WE'RE GOING IN FOR A LANDING!

SHE'S LEVELING OFF... FIVE... FOUR... THREE... TWO... ONE! FIRE RETARDO-JETS!

SLOWLY THE GIANT CRAFT SETTLED TO THE GROUND AND A FEW MOMENTS LATER...



SIR, THE AIR IS CHEMICALLY DIFFERENT THAN OUR ATMOSPHERE... BUT IT'S BREATHABLE!

CAPTAIN POPE! LOOK INTO THE VIEWER... OUR SHIP IS SURROUNDED... BY... BY...



EAGERLY THE MEN LOOKED INTO THE VIEWER! WHAT MONSTERS LURKED IN THE UNKNOWN! BUT YOU COULD HARDLY CALL THESE MONSTERS...



...BY, BEAUTIFUL GIRLS!

IT TOOK BUT A FEW DAYS FOR THE EARTHMEN TO SET UP CAMP AND TO BEGIN WORK ON THEIR ASSIGNED PROJECT! A PROJECT THAT IF IT WAS TO SUCCEED WOULD REVOLUTIONIZE THE METHOD OF SPACE TRAVEL!



WHAT IS THAT STRANGE THING YOUR MEN ARE WORKING ON?

IT TOOK US FOUR YEARS TO TRAVEL FROM EARTH TO THIS PLANET, BUT WHEN THIS MACHINE IS COMPLETED WE CAN MAKE THE TRIP IN A MATTER OF SECONDS!

THE WOMEN WERE NOT ONLY BEAUTIFUL, BUT ALSO FRIENDLY...

WE ARE PEACEFUL SPACEMEN FROM THE PLANET EARTH ON A SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION TO YOUR SOLAR SYSTEM!

EARTH? SOLAR SYSTEM? I DO NOT UNDERSTAND... BUT YOU ARE WELCOME AS FRIENDS AMONG MY PEOPLE!



WE CALL IT AN **ELECTRONIC EYE INTERSPACE TRANS-PLANTER**! A PERSON OR OBJECT PLACED INSIDE WILL BE TRANSFORMED INTO ENERGY, DIFFUSED THROUGH THE LIGHT BEAM EXISTING BETWEEN HERE AND EARTH AND BROUGHT BACK TO ORIGINAL STATE BY A SIMILAR MACHINE THERE!

LANCE DAYSTROM WAS THE CHIEF ENGINEER ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE E.E.I.T... BUT THERE WERE TIMES WHEN HE FOUND IT RATHER DIFFICULT TO CONCENTRATE ON THE TASK AT HAND...



SIR, WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM WITH THE INSULATION ON THESE RESISTORS... HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS?

YEAH, SHE SURE IS! ER, WHAT... WHAT WAS THAT YOU WERE SAYING?



BASICALLY A SHY MAN, LANCE BIED HIS TIME WITH THE BEAUTIFUL CREATURE! BUT NOTICING THE LACK OF ANY NATIVE MALES IT WASN'T TOO LONG BEFORE HE STRUCK UP A FRIENDSHIP WITH THE ALLURING GIRL!

LACTRA, EH? THAT'S AN ODD NAME!

THERE ARE MANY THINGS ON MY PLANET YOU MAY FIND ODD... BUT, I'M SURE I HAVE OTHER THINGS TO OFFER BESIDE A NAME!



AS YOU CAN SEE, FEMININE LURES HAD EVEN PENETRATED TO THE VOIDS OF OUTER SPACE! AND THIS WAS A FRIENDSHIP THAT WAS DESTINED TO BLOSSOM EVEN FURTHER! BUT AT THAT INSTANT A STRANGE PERIL WAS SEEN IN THE SKIES!

LOOK, LACTRA... SOMETHING COMING TOWARD US!

IT'S THE WINGED SCABS! RUN... TAKE COVER!





THE TERRIBLE INVADERS WERE ON THE UNSUSPECTING EARTHMEN BEFORE THEY KNEW WHAT HAPPENED...



DESPERATELY LANCE TRIED TO FIGHT OFF THE MONSTER... BUT HE WAS NO MATCH FOR ITS SUPERIOR STRENGTH AND WAS FIGHTING A LOSING BATTLE...

IT... IT'S NO... USE... HE'S... TOO... POWERFUL...



...UNTIL LACTRA ENTERED THE FIGHT. LANCE WATCHED IN AMAZEMENT AT HER TACTICS WHICH DEFIED DESCRIPTION...



... A TACTIC THAT SUDDENLY PARALYZED THE WINGED SCAB WHICH FELL HELPLESSLY AT LANCE'S FEET...



IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE THE SPACEMEN, WITH THEIR SUPERIOR WEAPONS, HAD BEATEN OFF THE WINGED INVADERS... AND THE BATTLE ENDED IN A COMPLETE VICTORY FOR THE EARTHMEN AND LACTRA'S PEOPLE!

...AND BEING THE MASTERFUL MALE, LANCE QUICKLY RECOVERED HIS SENSES AND FINISHED OFF THE MONSTER!

THERE... HE WON'T GIVE US ANY MORE TROUBLE!



THEY'VE GONE! THEY'VE GONE! YOU'VE BEATEN THEM OFF!



AFTER THE DEFEAT OF THE WINGED SCABS, THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN LANCE AND LACTRA NATURALLY DEVELOPED EVEN FURTHER! AND JUST AS NATURALLY BLOSSOMED INTO LOVE! IT WAS DIFFICULT, OF COURSE, BECAUSE, LANCE, AS YOU'VE DISCOVERED, WAS STILL RATHER SHY...

I... ER... DON'T KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN... BUT I THINK YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY IT... I... I UNDERSTAND... DARLING!



LANCE DIDN'T HAVE TO EXPRESS HIS FEELINGS... HIS ARDENT KISS SPOKE FOR HIM... AND LACTRA UNDERSTOOD!



THE NEXT DAY WAS TO BE A DAY FULL OF SURPRISES AND WONDERFUL NEWS TO THE PEOPLE IN LOVE!

DARLING, I HAVE WONDERFUL NEWS... I TOLD THE CAPTAIN WE WANT TO GET MARRIED AND HE SAID HE'LL LET US BE THE FIRST PEOPLE TRANSENERGIZED TO EARTH THROUGH THE E.E.I.T.!

THAT'S MARVELOUS... I'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT YOUR PLANET THAT I'LL JUST HAVE TO SEE IT TO BELIEVE IT!

I TOLD MOTHER AND SHE'S VERY THRILLED ABOUT WHAT HAS HAPPENED...

...AND I THINK IT'S WONDERFUL THAT YOU TWO CHILDREN OF DIFFERENT WORLDS HAVE FOUND LOVE IN EACH OTHER!



THIS OCCASION CALLS FOR A LITTLE CELEBRATION SO I'VE PREPARED A SMALL FEAST!

IT IS OUR CUSTOM NOT TO REFUSE FOOD ONCE IT IS SERVED! BUT I'M SURE YOU WILL ENJOY MOTHER'S COOKING!



IT WAS A RATHER STRANGE AND MORBID FEAST THAT WAS SET BEFORE LANCE! BUT HE REMEMBERED WHAT HAD HAPPENED WITH THE WINGED SCABS AND SIMPLY PASSED IT OFF AS ONE OF THE CUSTOMS OF THE PEOPLE... OR TRIED TO!

MMM, THESE ARE DELICIOUS... WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, LANCE?

WELL... I'M NOT REALLY VERY HUNGRY!



THE DAY PASSED QUICKLY AND LIKE TWO STRANGERS GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER, WAS SPENT IN FINDING OUT ABOUT THE OTHERS DIFFERENT BACKGROUND!

DARLING, I DON'T BELIEVE I'VE SEEN ANY MEN SINCE I'VE BEEN HERE! WHERE ARE THEY?

WHEN THEY BECOME OLD ENOUGH TO MATE OUR LAW REQUIRES THAT THEY STAY ON ANOTHER PART OF THE PLANET!



FINALLY, AFTER WHAT SEEMED AN ETERNITY, THE DAY THEY HAD BEEN WAITING FOR ARRIVED... THE COMPLETION OF THE E.E.I.T.! EVERYTHING WAS THOROUGHLY CHECKED AND THE TWO LOVERS WERE PLACED SIDE BY SIDE IN THE MACHINE...

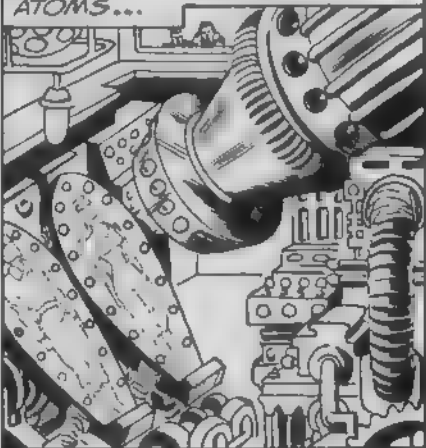


DON'T BE FRIGHTENED, MY LOVE... WE'LL BE ON EARTH BEFORE YOU KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED!

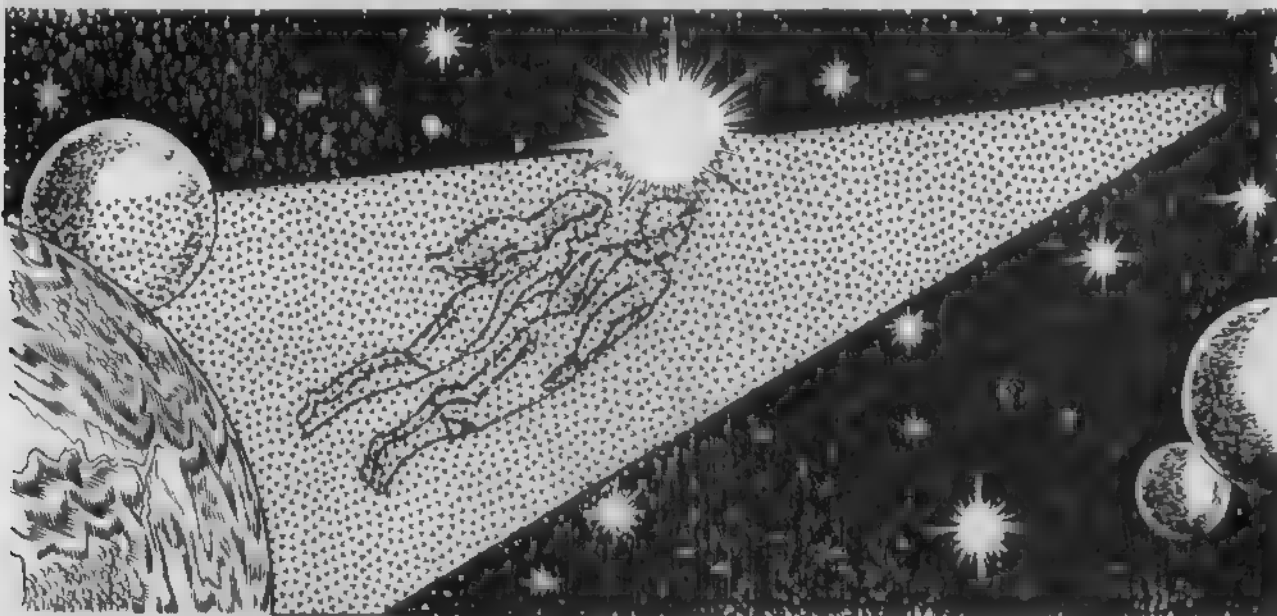


WITH YOU BESIDE ME I HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR!

THE SWITCH IS THROWN AND THEIR BODIES ARE BROKEN DOWN INTO TRILLIONS OF ATOMS...



...WHICH ARE DIFFUSED THROUGH THE LIGHT BEAM THAT EXISTS BETWEEN THE TWO PLANETS...



... THE ATOMS ARE PICKED UP BY THE RECEIVITING MACHINE ON EARTH, REBUILT TO THEIR ORIGINAL FORM AND A FEW MOMENTS LATER LANCE AND LACTRA MATERIALIZE TO BEGIN THEIR LIFE ANEW!

WELCOME HOME, DARLING... WELCOME TO EARTH!

WHY... WHY... IT'S BEAUTIFUL! IT'S EVERYTHING YOU SAID AND MORE!



THE HONEYMOONERS SUFFERED THROUGH THE MANY CUSTOMARY CEREMONIES AND EVENTUALLY SUCCEEDED IN ELUDING THE HIGH EARTH OFFICIALS...

WELL, DARLING... AT LAST WE'RE ALONE! HOW'S MY BRIDE TAKING EVERYTHING?

I... I... FEEL DIZZY... IT MUST BE THE ATMOSPHERIC CHANGE! MAYBE I'LL FEEL BETTER IN THE MORNING!





LANCE AWAKENED EARLY THE NEXT MORNING AND TURNED TO GREET HIS NEW BRIDE! OR TRIED TO!

WHAT THE... I... I'M TIED DOWN!



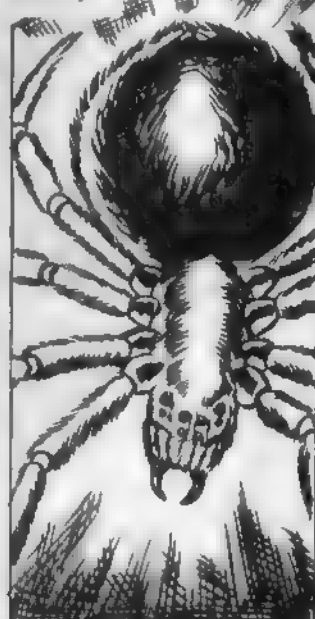
AT FIRST HE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND IT! WAS THIS ANOTHER OF HER STRANGE CUSTOMS?



BUT AS SHE BITES INTO HIS NECK AND HE FEELS A BURNING POISONOUS VENOM SEEPING THROUGH HIS VEINS PARALYZING HIS EVERY MUSCLE... HE REALIZES THE ANSWER TO IT ALL!



NOW HE KNOWS WHY INSECTS WERE HER MAIN SOURCE OF FOOD... WHY HER HOME WAS A TENT OF SILK - SPUN SILK... WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THE MALE POPULATION OF HER PLANET! NOW HE KNOWS ALL THOSE ANSWERS.



NOW HE KNOWS THAT HER FORM OF LIFE IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF A CERTAIN INSECT HERE ON EARTH... AN INSECT THAT **DEVOURS** THE MALE ONCE IT IS MATED... AN INSECT SCIENTIFICALLY NAMED THE LATRODECTUS MACTAN!



IN A FEW SECONDS I'LL BE DEAD AND MY WIFE WILL BE A WIDOW...  
**A BLACK WIDOW!**



THE END

# VOODOO MAGIC



IT ALL BEGAN ON THE ISLAND OF HAITI WHERE RICHIE AND HIS FAMILY WERE SPENDING THEIR VACATION --

WHY DON'T YOU GO FOR A SWIM, RICHIE -- THEY SAY YOU CAN'T BEAT SWIMMING IN THIS SURF!

YES, DEAR -- BUT PLEASE BE CAREFUL!



RICHIE WAS A STRANGE BOY -- QUIET, MOROSE -- AND COMING FROM WEALTHY PARENTS, HE WAS INCLINED TO BE SPOILED! AND IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR THAT NATIVE BOY STRUGGLING IN THE SURF, THIS STORY MIGHT NEVER HAVE HAPPENED --

HELP!  
HELP!

MUST HAVE A CRAMP -- AND NOBODY BUT ME AROUND TO HELP HIM!



RICHIE DIDN'T HESITATE-- BUT SWAM QUICKLY TO THE STRICKEN BOY'S SIDE--

MY LEG! MY LEG!

JUST TAKE IT EASY--RELAX-- DO WHAT I SAY--



IT WAS A HARD SWIM BACK THROUGH THE SURGING SEAS TO THE BEACH - BUT RICHIE MADE IT! AND THERE THEY WERE MET BY THE BOY'S MOTHER - HIS GRATEFUL MOTHER--

MY SON! MY SON! YOU'RE ALIVE! HOW CAN I EVER REPAY YOU?

BUT YOU DON'T OWE ME ANYTHING-- ANYBODY WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAME THING!



BUT THE NATIVE WOMAN WAS GRATEFUL--SHE HAD TO REPAY RICHIE--REPAY HIM ANY WAY SHE KNEW--

TONIGHT YOU WILL COME TO THE FORBIDDEN JUNGLE--THERE I WILL SHOW YOU THE SECRET OF THE LIVING-DEAD--YOU WILL LEARN OF THE STRANGE POWERS THAT HAVE BEEN DENIED TO MEMBERS OF YOUR RACE--



RICHIE HAD HEARD OF THE STRANGE RITES OF THE NATIVES OF HAITI--BUT HAD NEVER BELIEVED THEM! BUT WHAT DID HE HAVE TO LOSE? SO THAT NIGHT---

YOU HAVE COME--GOOD--BE QUIET NOW--AND I SHALL SHOW YOU SECRETS THAT NO WHITEMAN'S EYES HAVE EVER WITNESSED!



AND SO RICHIE WATCHED--AND LEARNED--AND MARVELLED--FOR THERE BEFORE HIS EYES WAS REVEALED THE SECRETS OF THE AGES--THE VODOO RITES--

WATCH, MY SON--WATCH AND YOU SHALL BE MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE!





RICHIE SAW MUCH THAT NIGHT-- AND WONDERED-- BAH--IT COULDN'T BE TRUE-- THINGS LIKE THAT JUST DON'T EXIST ANYMORE! AND THEN THE VACATION WAS OVER, AND THE FAMILY RETURNED HOME-- BACK TO THEIR NORMAL LIVES---

THEY WENT BACK TO THEIR NORMAL LIVES-- AND IF ANYTHING, RICHIE BECAME EVEN MORE SPOILED-- DEMANDS MORE THINGS FROM HIS WEALTHY FATHER!

BUT WHY CAN'T I HAVE A CAR LIKE THIS? I KNOW HOW TO DRIVE!

BECAUSE I SAY YOU CAN'T THAT'S WHY-- BECAUSE YOU'RE A SPOILED BRAT WHO GETS EVERYTHING HE WANTS-- BUT THIS IS WHERE I DRAW THE LINE! THIS IS MY CAR-- YOU'RE NOT TO DRIVE IT!



AND THEN RICHIE REMEMBERED -- WHY NOT-- TAKE A CHANCE - WHAT DID HE HAVE TO LOSE-- HE'D SHOW HIS FATHER --

SHE TOLD ME WHAT TO DO-- I KNOW THE SECRET - IF I CAN'T USE THAT CAR-- NOBODY CAN! I'LL SHOW HIM!



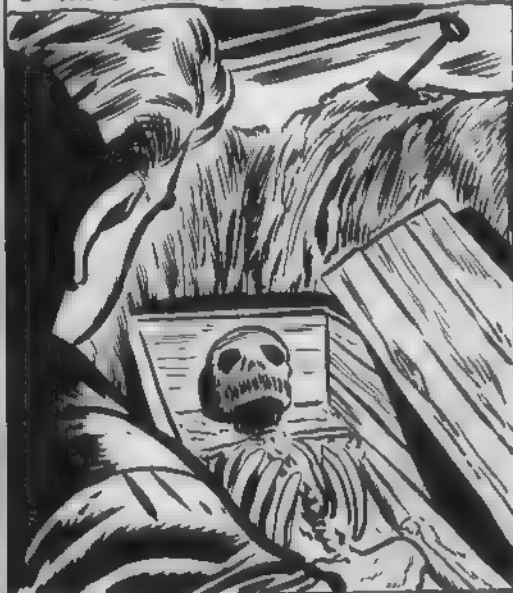
FIRST HE HAD TO PREPARE THE INGREDIENTS - THE HEART FROM A DEAD CHICKEN --



THEN THE MUD FROM THE LEFT SIDE OF A RIVER BANK SCOOPED UNDER A FULL MOON AT MIDNIGHT--



AND FINALLY THE DUST FROM THE BONES OF THE CORPSE OF A MURDERER --



FINALLY IT WAS GATHERED TOGETHER - AND RICHIE MIXED THE STRANGE CONCOCTION AS HE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED --

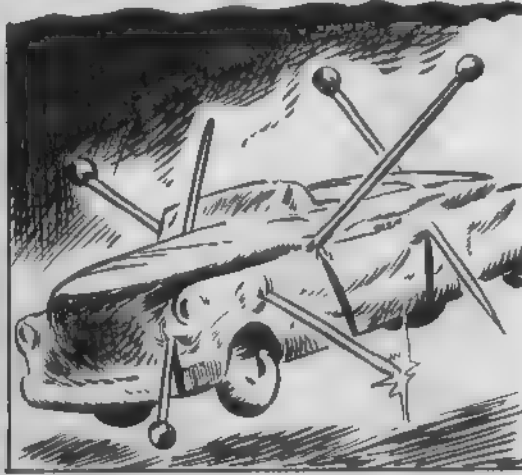


NOW IT WAS FINISHED - JUST AS THE NATIVE WOMAN HAD TOLD HIM -- BUT ONE THING REMAINED TO BE DONE --

THE PINS! THE PINS SHE GAVE ME!



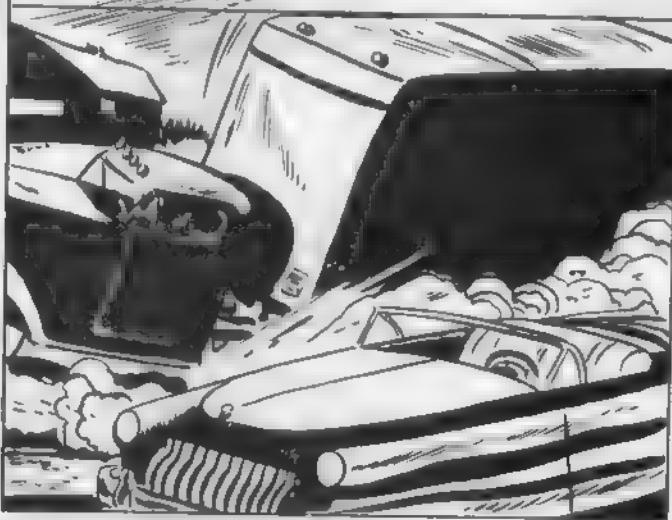
SLOWLY AND DELIBERATELY HE PLUNGED THE PINS INTO THE MODEL - AND RE-PEATED THE INCANTATION THAT HE HAD BEEN FORCED TO MEMORIZE! THEN IT WAS DONE - NOW IT WAS IN THE HANDS OF THE GODS -- THE VODOO GODS!



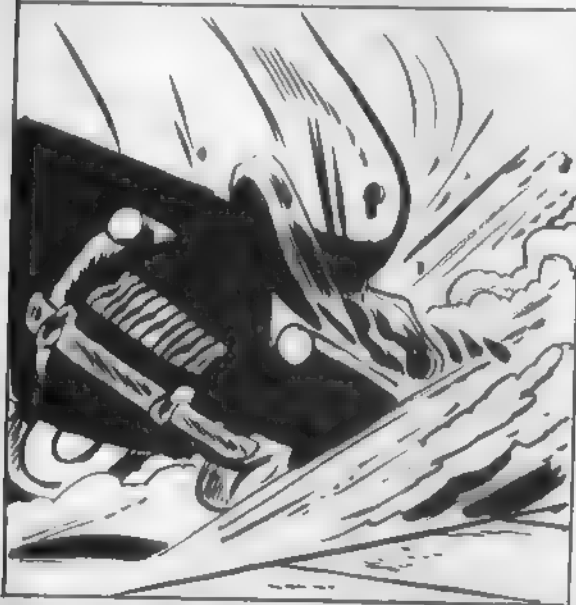
THEY WONDERED WHAT THE HUGE TRAILER TRUCK WAS DOING ON THE STREET -- IT MUST HAVE MADE A WRONG TURN --



THEN IT TURNED ONTO THE STREET WHERE RICHIE LIVED -- BUT IT WAS TOO HUGE TO TAKE THE CORNER -- MUCH TOO LARGE --



THERE WAS A LOUD CRASH -- THE RIPPING OF STEEL -- WHAT ONCE WAS A BEAUTIFUL CAR NOW WAS A SMASHED WRECK --



IT WAS A SHAKY FATHER THAT EXAMINED WHAT WAS LEFT -- FOR HE COULD VERY WELL HAVE BEEN DRIVING IT WHEN THE ACCIDENT HAPPENED --

MY CAR! MY CAR! HOW COULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED -- WHERE DID THAT TRUCK COME FROM -- IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ON THE HIGHWAY -- NOT A RESIDENTIAL STREET!



SEE HOW ACCIDENTS HAPPEN, RICHIE -- NOW AREN'T YOU GLAD THAT I DIDN'T LET YOU USE THE CAR?

HUH -- OH, SURE, DAD -- SURE!



RICHIE HADN'T EVEN HEARD WHAT HIS FATHER SAID -- FOR HE REALIZED NOW THAT THE NATIVE WOMAN HADN'T LIED -- SHE TOLD HIM THE SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE -- AN UNTOLD POWER WAS RICHIE'S TO CONTROL!



NOW THAT RICHIE WAS SURE OF THE STRANGE POWER THAT HAD BEEN GIVEN TO HIM HE BECAME MORE CALM, MORE SERENE -- WHY NOT -- EVERYTHING WAS HIS FOR THE TAKING! AND SO HE BIDDEN HIS TIME -- AND WAITED FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO TEST IT AGAIN!

LAURIE WAS A BEAUTIFUL GIRL - DID STRANGE THINGS TO A BOY - BUT FOR SOME REASON SHE NEVER GAVE HIM A TUMBLE - SHE ALWAYS HAD SOME EXCUSE WHEN HE'D ASK FOR A DATE --

THERE'S A BIG DANCE TONIGHT AT MY DAD'S CLUB, LAURIE - LIKE TO GO?

I WOULD -- BUT I HAVE TO STAY HOME TONIGHT -- I'VE BEEN ELECTED BABY SITTER --



THAT NIGHT RICHIE THOUGHT HE'D GO OVER AND KEEP LAURIE COMPANY - BABY SITTING CAN GET KIND OF LONELY - BUT AS HE REACHED HER HOME --

SHE LIED TO ME - SHE DIDN'T WANT TO GO OUT WITH ME - I'LL SHOW HER! SHE CAN'T DO THAT TO ME AND GET AWAY WITH IT!



AND SO THE STRANGE CONCOCTION WAS REPEATED - LAURIE WOULD SUFFER FOR MAKING A FOOL OF HIM - SHE DIDN'T KNOW WHO SHE WAS DEALING WITH --

TEASING ME LIKE THAT - SO I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR HER - WELL WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT --



IF I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR HER THEN NEITHER IS ANYONE ELSE - I CAN'T LET HER GET AWAY WITH IT ANYMORE --



AND THE NEXT NIGHT --

BUT YOU LOVE ME, LAURIE -- SO WHY CAN'T WE GET MARRIED -- NOW -- TONIGHT --

YOU'RE TALKING LIKE A FOOL, JOHNNY - WE'RE TOO YOUNG TO THINK OF GETTING MARRIED -- AND IF YOU DON'T STOP THAT KIND OF TALK I'M LEAVING --

LAURIE WAS AS GOOD AS HER WORD - FOR SHE STARTED TO LEAVE - BUT JOHNNY COULDN'T LET THAT HAPPEN -- HE HAD TO STOP HER -- SHE COULDN'T WALK OUT ON HIM - HE LOVED HER SO --

NO - YOU CAN'T LEAVE -- I WON'T LET YOU!

WELL I AM! STOP IT JOHNNY! YOU'RE HURTING ME - LET ME GO!



AND THEN IT WAS TOO LATE TO STOP -- EVEN IF HE WANTED TO -- FOR SOME STRANGE POWER HAD CONTROL OF HIM - OF WHAT HE WAS DOING --

STOP IT, JOHNNY -- STOP -- JOHN - NY -- ST -- O - P - ARRGH!

I CAN'T -- I CAN'T!





THEY FOUND LAURIE DEAD.. STRANGLED.. AND ~~RICHIE~~ LAUGHED-- FOR SHE WOULD NO LONGER BE ABLE TO TEASE HIM-- TO TAUNT HIM! AND NOW HE KNEW THE REAL POWER OF THIS ANCIENT SECRET-- A POWER THAT WAS UNCONTROLLABLE-- UNSTOPPABLE!

RICHIE THOUGHT IT OVER--AND WAS SURE OF HIMSELF--NOTHING COULD STOP HIM NOW--NOTHING! AND A FEW MONTHS LATER, IN CAPITOLS OF THE GREAT POWERS ALL OVER THE WORLD STRANGE MESSAGES WERE RECEIVED! MESSAGES THAT BROUGHT LAUGHTER--WORRY!

THE CRAZY FOOL-- WHAT IS HE TRYING TO DO-- STEAL OUR THUNDER? BAH--JUST IGNORE IT!

HMM--UNDOUBTEDLY SOME CRACK POT! BETTER CALL IN SCOTLAND YARD THOUGH--ONE CAN NEVER TELL!

HENRI--DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE MESSAGE, PARLIAMENT RECEIVED YESTERDAY?

MAIS OUI-- AS IF WE DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH TROUBLE! PROBABLY A RUSSIAN PLOT!

NEVER CAN TELL ABOUT THIS-- BETTER CALL IN THE F.B.I.!

MOSCOW

LONDON

PARIS

WASHINGTON

BUT THE F.B.I ALWAYS CHECKED INTO MATTERS OF THIS KIND--THEY NEVER KNEW WHAT THEY MIGHT RUN INTO! AND A SHORT TIME LATER!

RICHARD BENTON? DOES HE LIVE HERE?

YES HE DOES--WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH HIM?

AND THE AGENT TOLD RICHIE'S MOTHER WHAT HE KNEW!

WE RECEIVED THIS COMMUNIQUE THE OTHER DAY--WE'RE CHECKING INTO IT--AFTER ALL, IT ISN'T EVERY DAY THAT SOMEBODY WANTS ALL THE WORLD GOVERNMENTS TO GIVE THEIR POWER TO HIM--THAT HE WANTS TO RULE ALL OF THE EARTH!

RICHIE HAS BEEN ACTING STRANGELY LATELY--HMM--I WONDER?

NOW NOW THERE WAS NO SENSE IN TALKING--NOW WAS THE TIME TO FIND OUT EXACTLY WHAT RICHIE WAS UP TO--

THIS IS HIS ROOM? WELL, I'M GOING TO FIND OUT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT!

OH, DEAR--I'M SURE HE DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING BY THAT NOTE--AFTER ALL HE'S ONLY A CHILD--IT'S PROBABLY JUST A GAG--

BUT IT WASN'T A GAG--AND RICHIE HAD BEEN INSULTED AGAIN--HOW COULD THEY REFUSE HIM? DIDN'T THEY KNOW HE'D SHOW THEM--HE'D GET EVEN!

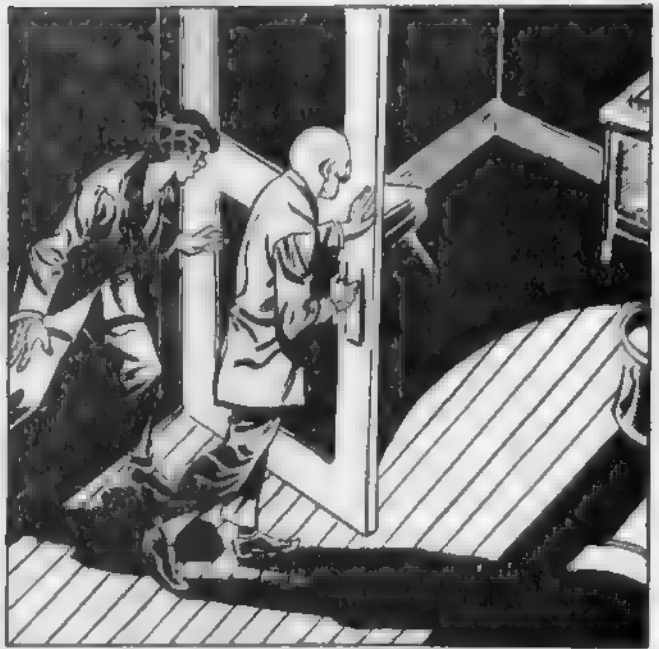
END











# HIS FINAL CHOICE

WHEN A MAN IS CLOSE TO DEATH HIS THOUGHTS TURN TO HIS NEXT ABODE... NAMELY, IS HE GOING TO **HEAVEN OR HELL!** THIS IS THE TALE OF SUCH A MAN, SILAS KRANE... DYING... ALONE IN THE WORLD... HE TOO THOUGHT ABOUT... **HIS FINAL CHOICE!**

TRAPANI  
FINOCCHIARO

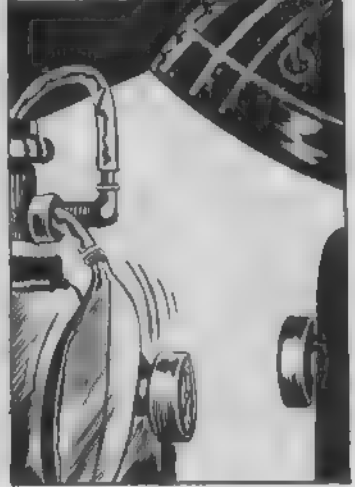
I'M AFRAID KRANE CAME TO US TOO LATE! THAT TUMOR HAS SPREAD TO THE DANGER POINT!

JUST DO YOUR BEST, DOCTOR... A MAN CAN'T EXPECT ANYMORE!

WELL, HERE GOES... HE'S VERY CLOSE TO DEATH RIGHT NOW! I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN SAVE HIM!

TRY, TRY! WHILE THERE'S STILL LIFE, THERE'S HOPE!

**BREATHE DEEPLY KRANE** ...IN...OUT...IN...OUT... OH NO, IT LOOKS LIKE... YES, I'M AFRAID THAT THE DOCTOR WAS TOO LATE!!





YOU DIDN'T MAKE IT, KRANE... BUT IT ISN'T SO BAD, IS IT? ISN'T THIS WHAT YOU EXPECTED... WHAT YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD BE LIKE... BUT HOW WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE DEAD!



BUT WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE? THIS IS WHERE THE GREAT DECISION IS MADE... THIS IS WHERE THEY BALANCE YOUR LIFE AND DECIDE WHAT YOU DID WITH IT! THIS IS THE BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN **HEAVEN AND HELL!**



WHAT'S THE MATTER, KRANE... AFRAID? WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO BE AFRAID OF... SURELY YOUR LIFE WAS ABOVE REPROACH... OR WAS IT?



THEY'VE MADE THEIR DECISION, KRANE... OR I SHOULD SAY YOU'VE MADE IT FOR THEM... THE WORDS AND DEEDS WERE SET DOWN BY YOU IN YOUR BOOK OF LIFE...



YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS, DON'T YOU? IT COULDN'T BE ANY OTHER... AND YOU CAN'T CHANGE IT NOW... YOU'RE TOO LATE! FEEL THAT HEAT... SMELL THAT SULPHUR... YOU'RE IN **PURGATORY!**



GREETINGS, SILAS KRANE, GREETINGS! I HAVE BEEN EXPECTING YOU!



BUT... BUT I'VE BEEN A GOOD MAN! I DON'T BELONG HERE... I BELONG IN... IN **HEAVEN!**

THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL SAY, BUT I GUESS YOU'RE NO WORSE THAN THE REST OF THEM! HERE, LET ME READ SOMETHING OF YOUR LIFE... **SELFISH... GREEDY... MISERLY... THOUGHTLESS... DOMINATING... SEEKER OF POWER...** NOT A VERY PRETTY PICTURE, IS IT?



COME, SILAS... LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT YOUR PUNISHMENT WILL BE. SINCE YOU ARE LIKE THE AVERAGE SINNER, YOU HAVE YOUR CHOICE! WE ARE VERY DEMOCRATIC DOWN HERE!



THESE ARE THE MEN WHO MUST SUPPLY OUR FUEL... NOT AN EASY JOB, BUT WE HAVE WORSE!



AND THESE ARE THE **FIRES OF HELL!** SURELY YOU'VE HEARD OF THEM, HAVEN'T YOU? WELL, WHICH SHALL IT BE... THE PITS OR THE FURNACES?



BUT... BUT I HAVEN'T BEEN A REALLY BAD MAN... CAN'T WE MAKE SOME KIND OF A DEAL... A BARGAIN!

YOU WOULD BARGAIN WITH ME! FOOL! COME, LET ME SHOW YOU THOSE WHO HAVE DEALT WITH **THE DEVIL!**



THESE ARE THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO WOULD DEAL WITH ME... **DOOMED FOREVER TO WALK THE FIRES OF PURGATORY!** IS THAT WHAT YOU DESIRE?

NO... NO... ANYTHING... ANYTHING... BUT THAT!



WELL, I'VE GIVEN YOU MORE TIME THAN I THOUGHT... I'VE MADE UP MY MIND... **TO THE FURNACES!**

**NO!** NOT THAT! I COULDN'T TAKE IT... YOU'VE GOT TO LISTEN!

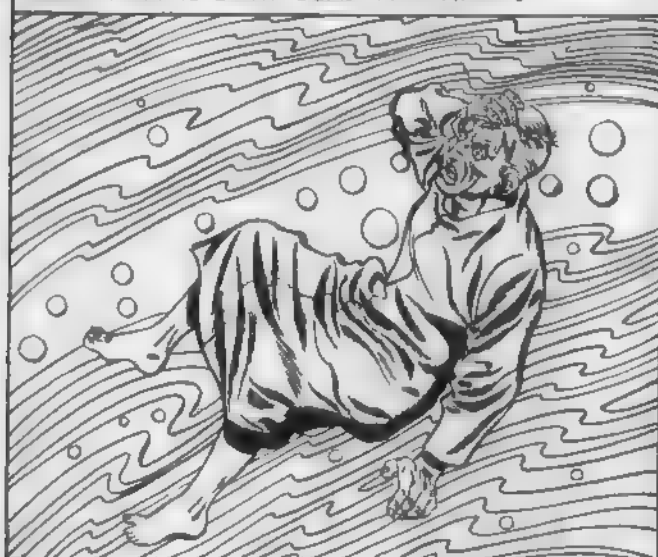


**THAT'S THE MATTER, SILAS, COULDN'T YOU TAKE IT? YOU'VE MADE YOUR BED, NOW LIE IN IT!**

**TAKE HIM AWAY!**



**WHAT HAPPENED? THIS ISN'T HELL... THIS IS THE NETHER-NETHER LAND IN BETWEEN... THE PLACE WHERE MAN IS BOTH DEAD AND ALIVE!**



LOOK, HE'S COMING OUT OF IT!

WHAT...WHAT HAPPENED! WHERE AM I?



YOU'RE GOING TO BE ALRIGHT, MR. KRANE! WE THOUGHT WE HAD LOST YOU THERE! BUT YOU PULLED THROUGH! FOR A WHILE WE EVEN FIGURED YOU WERE DEAD!

YOU FIGURED CORRECTLY... I WAS!



WHAT WAS THIS ALL ABOUT? JUST MY WAY OF SAYING THAT THERE'S A LITTLE BIT OF **THE DEVIL** IN ALL OF US... NO MAN IS PERFECT, EACH IN HIS OWN WAY HAS SOME EVIL IN HIS SOUL. WE MAKE OUR OWN HELLS AND OUR OWN HEAVENS...OUR DESTINIES ARE SHAPED BY OUR OWN HANDS. IN THE FINAL JUDGEMENT, **THIS IS YOUR LAST CHOICE...** DO WITH IT WHAT YOU WILL!



**THE END**



HOW COMPLETELY OUT OF PLACE YOU LOOK NOW. UNSHAVEN, DISHEVELLED IN APPEARANCE, AS YOUR TREMBLING BODY HUNCHES OVER A MUTILATED CORPSE! NEITHER YOUR FOUL DEED NOR THE COLD DAWN-LIT GROUNDS IS MAKING YOU SHIVER, **ELDON COX**... INSTEAD IT'S THE NUMBING REALIZATION OF YOUR FLIGHT! YOUR LIFELONG FIGHT IS ENDING IN A TIE, AND IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF THE...

# WALL OF COAHUILA



IN A FLASH YOUR MIND GOES BACK TWENTY-FIVE YEARS TO THE MIDDLE 1870'S! YOU SEE YOURSELF SULKING BACKSTAGE OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM!

**CONFLICT!** AND IT WAS ALWAYS WITH **HUGH NELSON** IN THOSE DAYS! HE WAS YOUR RIVAL AND YOU ALWAYS PLAYED SECOND FIDDLE...



IT WAS CLOSE BETWEEN YOU AND ELDON, BUT THE LEAD IS YOURS, HUGH!



I WAS THE MAN OF MARIE'S DREAMS UNTIL THAT #10\*..# CAME ALONG!

BOTH OF YOU GRADUATED INTO WEALTHY AND SHREWD, HARD DRIVING INDUSTRIALISTS!

A YEAR OR SO AGO, ONE NIGHT, YOU COLLAPSED INTO ONE OF YOUR PERIODIC FITS OF DISSATISFACTION!



NELSON LITTERALLY STOLE THAT FRITSCHÉ CONTRACT RIGHT FROM MY FINGERTIPS!



LOOK AT THAT FACE WRINKLED FROM **DESPONDENCY** AND **HATE**, NOT FROM THE EASY CHALLENGE OF ACQUIRING WEALTH! JUST LOOK AT ME! GROWING OLD BEFORE MY TIME! AND ALL BECAUSE OF AN UNSUCCESSFUL **LIFELONG DUEL** WITH HUGH NELSON!



WHY? WHY? HE'S NO BETTER THAN I AM! I COULD KILL HIM EASILY IN A **REAL DUEL**!



BUT THAT'S OUT OF THE QUESTION! 'DUELING' HAS BEEN **PROHIBITED BY LAW**!



WAIT! WHY NOT? SURE SURE, WE COULD MAKE A **REAL AFFAIR** OUT OF IT! WE COULD **BUILD A DUELING SITE** ON MY PROPERTY IN MEXICO! AND THE WINNER WOULD INHERIT **BOTH FORTUNES!**

INSTEAD OF PRESENTING A **PHYSICAL INSULT**, YOU CONFINE YOUR CHALLENGE TO A **WRITTEN SLAP IN THE FACE!**

SHORTLY YOU RECEIVE AN ACCEPTANCE, BUT WITH AN UNEXPECTED **AMENDMENT...**



MY DEAR MR. NELSON  
I HAVE AT LONG LAST COME TO THE END OF MY PATIENCE! FOR YEARS I HAVE CONSIDERED YOU NOTHING BUT A...



BUT YOU SEEM TO HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT IT IS THE **CHALLENGED** WHO RECEIVES THE RIGHT TO NAME THE WEAPONS! I THEREFORE DEMAND THAT YOUR SUGGESTION OF **ONE PISTOL EACH** BE DELETED! INSTEAD WE WILL EACH BE ARMED WITH **TWO SMALL KNIVES...**

AS THE FOLLOWING YEAR DREW TO A CLOSE, SCORES OF MEXICAN PEONS BROUGHT THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HUGE **SQUARE** UNSCALABLE WALL NEAR COMPLETION! THE UNEDUCATED NATIVES WERE AWE STRUCK AT THE MAGNITUDE OF THEIR LABORS! THEY REFERRED TO IT SIMPLY AS "THE WALL" UNTIL ITS SIZE MAGNIFIED ITS IMPORTANCE AND IT WAS CHRISTENED AFTER ITS SITE.

### THE WALL OF COAHUILA!

COMPLICATED INHERITANCE PAPERS WERE NEGOTIATED WITH BOTH OF YOU NAMED AS THE OTHER'S BENEFICIARY IN THE EVENT OF ONE'S SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE! THEN CAME ONE LAST ANNOYING ERRAND



SEEMS AWFUL STRANGE, IF YOU ASK ME... WELDING THESE CHAINS AND KEYS AROUND YOUR NECKS AS THOUGH...

...AS THOUGH THEY WERE COLLARS, MR. LANGFORD? WELL, WE'RE NOT PAYING YOU TO THINK!

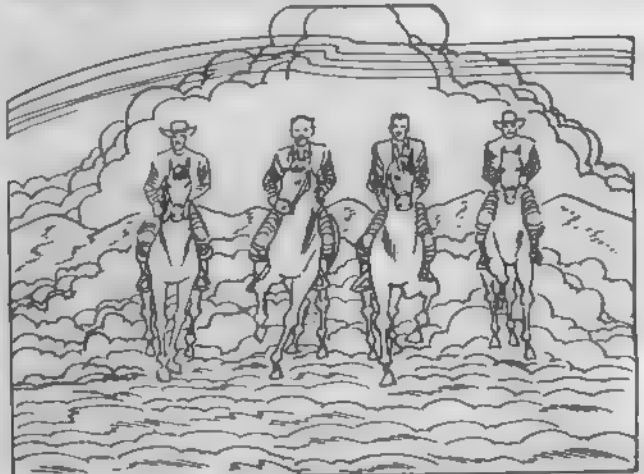
THE QUARTET ENTERED THE WALL'S **ONLY GATE** AT THE SOUTHWEST CORNER A FEW MINUTES BEFORE TWELVE! YOUR SECOND ESCORTED NELSON TO HIS STARTING POINT AT THE SOUTHEAST CORNER



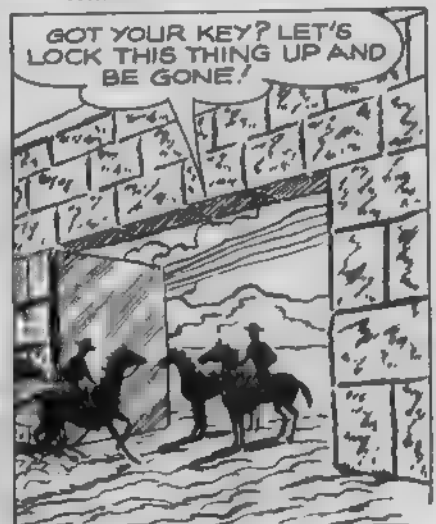
WHILE HIS SECOND AND YOU MADE THE LONG TREK TO THE NORTHWEST CORNER



YOU HAD SET **NOON, OCT. 11**, AS THE FATAL BEGINNING TIME... AND YOU CAN SEE THE TWO OF YOU AND YOUR **CHOSEN SECONDS** RIDING SILENTLY FORWARD AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR! THAT WAS **YESTERDAY!**



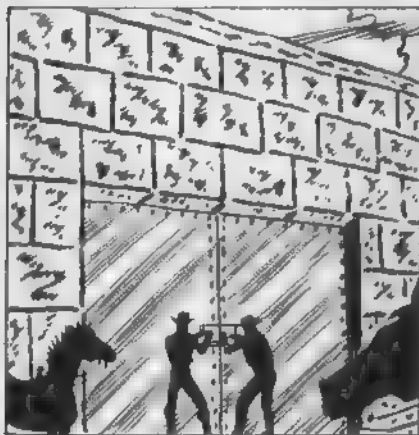
YOU WERE THEN LEFT TO **SEEK EACH OTHER OUT!** THE TWO ATTENDANTS MET AT THE STARTING POINT MINUTES LATER!



GOT YOUR KEY? LET'S LOCK THIS THING UP AND BE GONE!



THE RELUCTANT HINGES  
SQUEALED FROM THE BURDEN  
OF THE CLOSING CAST IRON  
DOORS! THE TWO MEN EACH  
TURNED A KEY AND  
THERE WERE TWO DULL  
CLICKS... EACH CARRYING A  
HOLLOW, DEADLY ENMITY!



THE TWO PUPPETS FOLLOW-  
ED THEIR INSTRUCTIONS TO  
THE LETTER LEAVING YOU  
TWO ALONE ALONE TO  
DECIDE YOUR OWN  
FATES!



I HAVE A FEELING  
THAT POOR FILLY IS  
GOING TO HAVE A  
LONG WAIT!

EXCEPT FOR SECRECY, THE  
LAST ACTION FOR WHICH  
THEY WERE PAID WAS TO  
DISCARD THEIR KEYS  
INTO THE RIO BABIA!



IT WAS ABOUT THEN, ELDON COX, THAT THE  
SENSATION OF LONELINESS BEGAN TO CREEP  
INTO YOUR BONES!... AND, TRULY, YOU WERE  
ALONE... MUCH MORE SO THAN IF THERE  
WERE NO ONE ELSE NEARBY!



THEY SAY THE NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES...  
BUT YOU WONDERED HOW DARKNESS COULD  
STARE AT YOU WITH MORE **EMPTY**  
**NOTHINGNESS** THAN THE STILL THAT  
MET YOUR EVERY GLANCE!



SOON YOU REGAIN YOUR COMPOSURE!



IT'LL BE EASY TO OUTWIT NELSON!  
I'LL **AMBUSH** HIM! SURE, SURE...  
I'LL JUST **HIDE SOMEWHERE** AND  
WAIT FOR HIM TO COME BY!

...BUT A SECTION IS A LOT OF LAND!  
YOU COULD HAVE WAITED THERE **DAYS**  
BEFORE HE MIGHT HAVE WANDERED  
BY! FOUR O'CLOCK CAME...



I FORGOT WE DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO  
**FOOD OR WATER!** I'LL HAVE TO HUNT  
HIM OUT AND GET THIS OVER QUICK!

YOU BEGAN THE HUNT, RATHER BOLDLY AT FIRST... BUT SOON THE SUN BEGAN TO SET

THE LAST GLIMMER OF SUNLIGHT FADED AND THE MOON ROSE, IT WAS THE NIGHT OF THE NEW MOON! YOU HAD CAREFULLY PLANNED FOR THAT!

I'LL HAVE TO BE MORE CAREFUL! HE COULD BE HIDING IN **ANY ONE** OF THOSE SHADOWS!

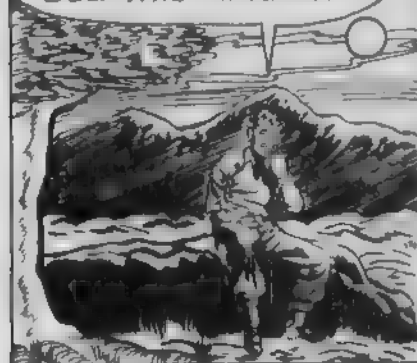


IT WAS AROUND NINE YOU BEGAN TO NOTICE THE FATIGUE IN YOUR LEGS! YOUR EXCITEMENT HAD TEMPORARILY HIDDEN THE SOFTNESS OF YOUR BODY!... SOFTNESS THAT HAD CREPT INTO THE LEISURE OF YOUR MIDDLE AGE!

OH YES... **THE KNIVES!** YOU CAREFULLY WITHDREW THE LONG SLENDER KNIFE FROM YOUR **RIGHT SIDE!** THIS KNIFE WAS SPECIALLY BALANCED FOR THROWING!

YOU RETURNED IT AND FINGERED THE **OTHER!** IT WAS A MUCH CRUDER KNIFE, THOUGH SHARPENED TO A **RAZOR'S EDGE!**

I WISH I DARED NAP! I'D HATE TO HAVE TO USE THIS AT NIGHT!



VICIOUS LITTLE TOOL!



THIS IS THE ONE THAT'LL SEVER NELSON'S HEAD!



...**TO CUT OFF NELSON'S HEAD!** THIS WAS PRACTICALLY IMPERATIVE, FOR AROUND HIS NECK WAS WELDED THE MATE TO YOUR KEY THE PAIR THAT WAS YOUR **ONLY OUTLET** FROM YOUR SELF-IMPOSED PRISON!

EVENING BECAME MORNING! THREE O'CLOCK AND **QUESTIONS... THOUGHTS... DOUBTS** BEGAN TORTURING YOUR MIND!

THAT'D BE BETTER'N LUGGING THE BODY CLEAR BACK TO THE GATE!



WHY DID I CALL FOR **THIS** KIND OF A DUEL? HOW LONG WILL THE HUNT GO ON? WILL HE SEE ME FIRST?



THE GRAY DAWNLIGHT BRIGHT-  
ENED AND YOUR EYELIDS GREW  
HEAVY, BUT THE **QUESTIONS**  
KEPT **BURNING...**



...UNTIL YOU COULD STAND IT  
**NO LONGER!**



YOU BURIED YOUR FACE IN  
YOUR HANDS AND **CRIED**,  
ELDON COX! FOR AN INSTANT  
YOU WISHED YOU WERE **DEAD**  
BUT THAT'S WHAT YOU WERE  
FIGHTING **AGAINST**,  
WASN'T IT?



THE **CRACK OF A TWIG** AND YOUR  
HEAD **POPPED UP!** IT WAS NELSON! YOUR  
SHOUTS MUST HAVE ATTRACTED HIM, BUT  
HE HADN'T SEEN YOU YET!



YOU THREW QUICKLY TO CATCH YOUR OPPON-  
ENT UNAWARES BUT YOUR **AIM WAS POOR...**



YOU SAW HIM CAREFULLY **REACHING** FOR  
HIS BELT AND NOT **SUSPECTING** YOU  
WOULD FRANTICALLY FLING YOUR  
**OTHER KNIFE...**



HE WAS **COCKY** NOW... ALMOST **OVER-CONFIDENT** AS HE APPROACHED! YOU  
CROUCHED AND REMOVED A SMALL PISTOL  
FROM INSIDE YOUR TROUSERS LEG! YOU  
DIDN'T **REALLY** WANT TO HAVE TO USE IT,  
DID YOU? BUT YOU JUST **COULDN'T**  
GAMBLE ON AN UNSURE THING!





**SMALL WONDER** YOUR SUB-CONSCIOUS PLAGUED YOU WITH DOUBTS WHETHER OR NOT NELSON HAD A CONCEALED WEAPON... FOR THE DISTRUSTFUL ARE THE MOST DISTRUSTING... YOU FIRED!



AND YOUR Foe THREW SIMULTANEOUSLY!



NELSON SPUN AND FELL... HE WAS DEAD! YOU SLUMPED TO THE GROUND AND TUGGED AT HIS KNIFE, WHICH HAD CAUGHT YOU IN THE RIGHT SIDE!



YOU SLID THE BLADE FROM YOUR WOUND AND JUMPED HIS LIFELESS FORM TO RELEASE YOUR PENT-UP FRENZY! YOU SLASHED AND TORE AND STABBED THE FLESH OF HIS STOMACH AND CHEST UNTIL... UNTIL...



...IN A MOMENT'S FLASHBACK YOU REMEMBERED THE WHOLE SET-UP OF YOUR DUEL... THE TEDIOUS PLANS... THE IRONY OF HAVING SPENT SO MUCH! THE SIGHT BEFORE YOU HAD SPURRED THOSE THOUGHTS... SO NOW YOU LOOK ONCE MORE... STILL UNBELIEVING!



IN THE CLIMAX OF AN UNEQUAL JOUST THE BULLET THAT ENDED NELSON'S LIFE HAD PASSED SENTENCE ON YOUR OWN... FOR DANGLING FROM HIS NECK IS EVIDENCE OF YOUR DEADLY AIM... A TWISTED, NOW USELESS KEY!



THERE IS A FAINT SMILE ON YOUR LIPS NOW, AS YOU PAINFULLY TRUDGE TOWARD THE DISTANT GATE, WITH A BLOOD-SOAKED HAND HOLDING YOUR UNATTENDED WOUND! YOU FULLY RECOGNIZE HUMAN WEAKNESSES, SO YOU CLING TO YOUR LAST HOPE. THAT NELSON'S VACATED SECOND FORGOT TO TURN HIS KEY IN ONE OF THE DOORS TWO LOCKS! THAT WOULD MEAN, NELSON, THIS ISN'T... THE END!



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